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BATTLE SUMMARY No. 40

BATTLE FOR LEYTE GULF

23rd—26th October, 1944

1947

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BATTLE SUMMARY No. 40

BATTLE FOR LEYTE GULF

23rd—26th October, 1944

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Times in this Battle Summary are Zone–9, i.e., 9 hours fast on G.M.T., termed by the Americans "Item."

Bearings and courses are True.

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The Battle for Leyte Gulf

23rd—26th October, 1944

INTRODUCTION

(*See Plans 1 and 2*)

The great triple battle of 23rd to 26th October, 1944, known by the Americans as the Battle for Leyte Gulf, and by the British sometimes as the Second Battle of the Philippines, involved many different forces, both surface and air, and ranged over a wide area. The following summary is given as a guide.

The battle was the outcome of a Japanese attempt to throw the Americans out of the Philippines which they had invaded three days previously at Leyte, in a landing from the Gulf, between the islands of Leyte and Samar. The Japanese fleet sallied out in three detachments, and a series of major surface and air actions developed in and around the Philippine Islands, culminating on 25th October in three almost simultaneous naval battles: the Battle of Surigao Strait, the Battle off Samar, and the Battle off Cape Engano (Luzon Island). The three detachments or groups of the enemy fleet involved in these three engagements, are for convenience termed the Southern, Centre and Northern Force respectively.

The Southern Force,[1] mustering two slow old battleships, four cruisers, and destroyers was located in the Sulu Sea on 24th October. It approached Leyte in two groups, to attack the American unloading area, through the Mindanao Sea and its northern exit, the Surigao Strait, and was practically destroyed there by the U.S. Seventh Fleet (Vice-Admiral Kinkaid), early next day.

The Centre Force comprised the main body of the enemy fleet—five modern battleships, 10 cruisers, and destroyers.[2] It sailed from Brunei Bay, passed up the west coast of Palawan, where U.S. submarines attacked it on 23rd October, sinking two heavy cruisers and so damaging a third that it turned back to Singapore; it passed through the Mindoro Strait and Sibuyan Sea, where aircraft of Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet carrier groups lined up east of the Philippines sank a battleship and damaged and caused a heavy cruiser to turn back during day-long attacks on 24th; the still powerful remainder of the force, somewhat delayed through damage caused by these attacks, passed through the San Bernardino Strait during the night of 24th–25th and turned south, intending to engage the American Covering Force (Seventh Fleet), whilst the Southern Force emerged from Surigao Strait to clear out Leyte Gulf. The delay on 24th, however, had been sufficient to prevent the two attacks from synchronizing, though between the Japanese

[1] Secret Information Bulletin No. 22, General Recapitulation p. 78–44 states that the Southern Force carried troops, but there is no confirmation of this and no details are forthcoming.

[2] The Centre Force is described in this account of the battle as the main body, since it comprised the greater part of the surface fighting strength of the Japanese Fleet. The Japanese termed the Northern (Carrier) Force the main body, as the principal tactical force remaining in the striking force after most of the heavy units had been detached to form the Diversion Attack Forces.

Centre Force and Leyte there stood only the American Seventh Fleet Escort Carrier Group, operating off the east coast of Samar Island. The escort carriers, at the cost of heavy losses, held up the enemy for 2½ hours, when the Japanese Fleet retired, pursued by aircraft of the Seventh and Third Fleets, who severely handled it until the scattered survivors reached safety on 27th October.

The Japanese Northern Force comprised their carrier force—four carriers and two converted battleship carriers—with cruiser and destroyer screen. It left Japan about 20th October with only a small proportion of its aircraft, the remainder having been transferred to Formosa and the Philippines. The force was first located on the afternoon of 24th approaching the Philippines from the north-eastward; it was attacked by aircraft from the fast carriers of Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet during the whole of 25th off Cape Engano, the north-east point of Luzon, and the four carriers were sunk.

In conjunction with the sortie of the Japanese Fleet to relieve Leyte, their land-based aircraft from some of the numerous enemy airfields within range of Leyte made constant attacks on the northernmost of the three fast carrier groups of the Third Fleet east of the Philippines, causing the loss of the light carrier *Princeton*; and they also attacked the escort carriers of the Seventh Fleet operating farther south, and sank the *St. Lo*.

In all, 23 Japanese ships were sunk, including three battleships, four carriers, six heavy and three light cruisers, and seven destroyers. One further destroyer was sunk on 27th October, after the battle was considered to have terminated; and a light cruiser and a destroyer were sunk on 26th October whilst escorting reinforcements to Leyte.

The Americans lost one carrier, two escort carriers, two destroyers, one destroyer escort and one M.T.B., seven ships in all. The two British ships which were engaged suffered no damage.

Note on Sources

1. This account of the Battle for Leyte Gulf is based mainly on American Action Reports supplemented by the interrogation of certain Japanese officers. Only two British ships, H.M.A.S. *Shropshire* and H.M.A.S. *Arunta*, were engaged; both rendered reports. The list of American reports which can be traced as having been furnished to the Admiralty, is far from complete. In particular, the despatch of Admiral Halsey, Commander Third Fleet, has not been seen.

2. An account of the Battle for Leyte Gulf is contained in Annex A of *Operations in the Pacific Ocean Areas during the Month of October, 1944* (Commander-in-Chief U.S. Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas, Serial 002397, 31st May, 1945). This is referred to in this Battle Summary as "C.-in-C. Pac., *Report*". It contains some information which is not elsewhere available to the compilers of this Battle Summary, but, where discrepancies occur, the date of issue, 31st May, 1945, *i.e.*, before the defeat of Japan rendered enemy sources available, should be borne in mind.

3. Extracts from some of the Action Reports which have not been received by the Admiralty are printed in *Secret Information Bulletin No. 22—Battle Experience—Battle for Leyte Gulf, 23rd/27th October, 1944* (U.S. Fleet, Headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief, 1st March, 1945); and on pp. 78–12 to 78–14 of this publication, under the heading "Commander Third Fleet

(Supporting Force) reports in part " there are included what are presumed to be extracts from Admiral Halsey's despatch and are quoted as such in this narrative. The extracts stop short at 0730 on 25th October. *Secret Information Bulletin No. 22* contains also plans, photographs and explanatory matter and comments by the compilers.

4. In many of the original action reports the pages have been renumbered consecutively throughout by hand on the photostatt film. When referring to action reports in this Battle Summary the continuous pagination is used.

5. The Japanese official account of the battle is contained in " The Campaigns of the Pacific War " (United States Strategic Bombing Survey (Pacific)), Naval Analysis Division (Government Press). Interrogations of officers concerned in the battle have been printed by the (U.S.) Naval Analysis Division under the title *United States Strategic Bombing Survey [Pacific] Interrogations of Japanese Officials.*

6. The following reports have been used in compiling this account of the battle.

(A) ALLIED

THIRD FLEET

M.0411/45 .. .. .. *Action Report—Operations, 2nd to 29th October, 1944.* [Vice-Admiral J. S. McCain, U.S.N., Commander, Task Group 38.1, U.S.S. *Wasp*, flagship.]

M.0715/45 .. .. .. *U.S.S. " Wasp ", Report of Action, 2nd to 27th October, 1944.* [Flagship of C.T.G. 38.1.]

M.01571/45 .. .. .. *U.S.S. " Lexington ", Action Report on the engagement of enemy fleet units in the Sibuyan Sea on 24th October, 1944, and East of Luzon on 25th October, 1944.* [Flagship of Vice-Admiral M. A. Mitscher, C.T.F.38.]

M.0237/45 .. .. .. *Battle of the Philippines. Action Report C.T.G. 38.3.* [Rear-Admiral Sherman, U.S.S. *Essex.*] *24th to 25th October, 1944.*

M.012611/44 .. .. .. *Report of sinking of U.S.S. " Princeton " on 24th October, 1944.*

M.013239/44 .. .. .. *Battle of the Philippines, 24th October, 1944.* [U.S.S. *Princeton's*] *Action Report, including loss of U.S.S. " Princeton ".*

M.03212/45 .. .. .. *C.T.F. 34. Report of Operations in Philippines area, 6th October, 1944, to 3rd November, 1944.* [Report of Vice-Admiral W. A. Lee, Jr., Commander Battleships, U.S. Pacific Fleet, U.S.S. *" Washington "*, flagship.]

M.0263/45 .. .. .. *Combat Div. 9* [Rear-Admiral E. W. Hanson], *U.S.S. " South Dakota." Action Report 24th to 25th October, 1944, Philippines.*

M.04755/45 .. .. .. *U.S.S. " Alabama ", Action Report, Mindanao Sea, 24th to 25th October, 1944.*

M.0303/45 .. .. .. *U.S.S. " South Dakota ", Action Report, 6th October to 17th November, 1944.*

M.02325/45 .. .. .. *U.S.S. " Massachusetts ", Action Report, 25th October to 24th November, 1944, Philippines area.*

M.0128/45 (with M.0237/45) *U.S.S. " Massachusetts ", Action Report, 10th October to 15th November, 1944, Philippines area.*

M.01554/45 .. .. .. *Action Report, 25th October, 1944, Philippine Area.* [Rear-Admiral R. A. du Bose's report, U.S.S. *Santa Fé.*]

M.01553/45 (with M.01554/45) *U.S.S. " Santa Fé ", Action Report, 24th October and 25th October, 1944, Battle of the Philippines.*

M.02314/45 .. .. .. *U.S.S. " Santa Fé ", Action Report, 27th October, 1944.*

M.0510/45 .. .. .. *Action Reports, 24th to 27th October, 1944—West Pacific, U.S.S. " Birmingham ".*

M.0120/45 .. .. .. *U.S.S. " Gatling ", Action Report, 24th to 27th October, 1944. Western Pacific.*

M.09953/45 .. .. .. *C.T.G. 38.4 Operations in support of occupation of Leyte, 22nd to 31st October, 1944 (1st and 2nd Endorsements).*

Note.—The original report to which these endorsements refer, is not forthcoming.

7th FLEET

(Surigao Strait)

M.03008/45 .. .. .. *C.T.G.* 77.2 [Rear-Admiral J. B. Oldendorf, U.S.S. *Louisville*], *Action Report, Battle of Surigao Strait, 24th to 25th October, 1944.* This docket contains only the covering letter forwarding the reports of Destroyer Squadron 56, and Com. 7th Fleet's First Endorsement.

M.0512/45 .. .. .. [Commander Battle Line—Rear-Admiral Weyler, U.S.S. *Mississippi.*] *Action Report, Battle of Surigao Strait, 24th to 25th October, 1944.*

M.0632/45 (with M.0512/45) *U.S.S. " Mississippi ", Battle of Surigao Strait, 25th October, 1944.*

M.0410/45 (with M.01809/45) *U.S.S. " Mississippi ", Action Report, 19th to 24th October, 1944.*

M.01559/45 .. .. .. *Action Report, Battle of Surigao Strait, 25th October, 1944, U.S.S. " Mississippi ".* [Second Endorsement.]

M.0119/45 (with M.0124/45) *U.S.S. " Pennsylvania ", Action Report, 24th to 25th October, 1944, Surigao Strait.*

M.0650/45 .. .. .. *U.S.S. " Pennsylvania ", A/A Actions, 17th October to 25th November, 1944, Leyte area.*

M.02353/45 .. .. .. *Endorsements to U.S.S. " Pennsylvania's " Action Report, Surigao Strait.*

M.0124/45 .. .. .. [U.S.S. *Maryland*] *Action Report, 24th to 25th October, 1944, Surigao Strait.*

M.0642/45 .. .. .. *U.S.S. " Maryland ", Surigao Strait, Action Report, 24th to 25th October, 1944, 1st Endorsement.*

M.03371/45 (with M.0642/45) *C.T.U. 77.2.1 U.S.S. " Maryland ", Action Report, Surigao Strait, 24th to 25th October, 1944, 4th Endorsement.*

M.0625/45 .. .. .. *Task Group 77.3* [Rear-Admiral Berkey, U.S.S. *Phœnix*, flagship], *Leyte, occupation report, 3rd November, 1944.*

M.0414/45 .. .. .. *U.S.S. " Phoenix ", Action Report, Surigao Strait, 25th October, 1944.*

M.04764/45 .. .. .. *H.M.A.S. " Shropshire ", Battle Report on Action of 25th October, 1944—Surigao Strait.*

M.013238/44 (with M.0512/45) *U.S.S. " Boise ", Action against Japanese force in Surigao Strait, 25th October, 1944.*

M.0316/45 (with M.01809/45) *U.S.S. " Boise ", 20th to 24th October. Note.*—M.01809/45 does not deal with the subject of the present Battle Summary.

M.02343/45 .. .. .. *U.S.S. " Portland ", Action Report, 25th October, 1944, Leyte Gulf.*

M.01521/45 .. .. .. *U.S.S. " Newcomb ", Action Report, 24th to 25th October, 1944, Surigao Strait.*

M.01976/45 .. .. .. *H.M.A.S. " Arunta ", Action Report, 24th to 25th October, 1944, Leyte Gulf.*

M.04765/45 (with M.04530/45 —the latter is a duplicate and does not contain the endorsements).	*U.S.S. "Killen", Action Report, Surigao Strait, 25th October, 1944.*
M.0649/45	*Task Unit 78.3.5, Central Philippines, Report, 21st to 26th October, 1944.*

7th FLEET

(Samar)

M.012912/44	*Action Report, 12th to 27th October, 1944, Leyte Operation.* [Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's Report, omits the Battle off Samar.]
M.03229/45	*Carrier Division 27, report on Operations, 12th August, 1944 to 4th February, 1945, Palau and Philippines* [Rear-Admiral W. D. Sample's report].
M.0859/45	*U.S.S. "St. Lo", Action Report, War Damage Report, 25th October, 1944, Philippines.*
M.0509/45	*C.O., U.S.S. "St. Lo", Action Report, Battle of Samar.*
M.0304/45	*U.S.S. "Gambier Bay", Action Report, 20th to 25th October, 1944, Philippine area.*
M.013376/44	*Recommendations for improvement of future operations (Leyte, October, 1944).*

(B) Japanese

The following are the more important interrogations bearing on the battle in *Interrogations of Japanese Officials*, United States Strategic Bombing Survey [Pacific] (undated, but apparently 1946).

Nav. No. 9, U.S.S. B.S. No. 47. Battle of the Philippine Sea; Battle for Leyte Gulf. (Interrogation of Vice-Admiral Takeo Kurita, Commander-in-Chief, Second Fleet.)

Nav. No. 41, U.S.S. B.S. 170. Battle off Samar, 23rd to 26th October, 1944. (Interrogation of Commander Tonosuke Otano, Staff Officer (Operations) to Vice-Admiral Kurita.)

Nav. No. 35, U.S.S. B.S. 149. Battle off Samar, 25th October, 1944. (Interrogation of Rear-Admiral Tomiji Koyanagi, Chief of Staff to Vice-Admiral Kurita.)

Nav. No. 36, U.S.S. B.S. No. 150. Battle off Cape Engano, 24th to 25th October, 1944. (Interrogation of Captain Toshikazu Ohmae, Chief of Staff to Vice-Admiral Ozawa, Commander-in-Chief, First Mobile Fleet.)

Nav. No. 29, U.S.S. B.S. 113. Pearl Harbour—Battle of Philippines Sea—Battle for Leyte Gulf. (Interrogation of Captain Mitsuo Fuchida, Air Staff Officer to Commander-in-Chief, Combined Fleet.)

Nav. No. 55, U.S.S. B.S. No. 227. Battle for Leyte Gulf, October, 1944. (Interrogation of Vice-Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa, Commander-in-Chief, Carrier Force.)

Nav. No. 58, U.S.S. B.S. No. 233. Battle of Surigao Strait. (Interrogation of Commander Kokichi Mori, Torpedo Officer on Staff of Vice-Admiral Shima, Commander-in-Chief, Fifth Fleet.)

Nav. No. 64, U.S.S. B.S. No. 258. Japanese Naval Planning after Midway.

Nav. No. 69, U.S.S. B.S. No. 345. Battle off Cape Engano. (Interrogation of Rear-Admiral Chiaki Matsuda, former commanding officer of *Yamato*, and Commander Carrier Division 4 (*Ise* and *Hyuga*) from May, 1944, to February, 1945.)

Nav. No. 79, U.S.S. B.S. No. 390. Battle of Surigao Strait. (Interrogation of Commander Shigeru Nishino, Commanding Officer of Japanese destroyer *Shigure* in Battle of Surigao Strait.)

Nav. No. 83, U.S.S. B.S. No. 407. Savo Island—Midway—Solomons—Leyte Gulf. (Interrogation of—amongst others—Captain Kenkichi Kato, Executive Officer of the *Musashi* when sunk in Battle for Leyte Gulf.)

Nav. No. 115, U.S.S. B.S. No. 503. (Interrogation of Vice-Admiral Shigeru Fukudome, Commander, Second Air Fleet.)

The Battle for Leyte Gulf

23rd—26th October, 1944

CHAPTER I

ORGANIZATION OF THE ALLIED AND ENEMY FORCES

1. Situation in the Autumn, 1944

In the autumn of 1944, the advance of the Allies in the Pacific had brought them to a line on which they stood over against the Philippine Islands, the pivot on which they planned to wheel northward and attack the Japanese mainland. In the south-west, General MacArthur's Allied troops and ships, fighting their way northward from Australian and New Caledonian bases to Morotai in the Moluccas gained possession of points from which amphibious forces could assault the Philippines. Further north, in the wide spaces of the Pacific, Admiral Nimitz's great striding drive westward, storming or by-passing one after another the enemy strongholds in the Gilberts, Marshalls, Marianas and Guam, reached, in September, 1944, the airfields of the West Carolines, and anchorages where his supporting ships could find replenishment and shelter.

No breathing space was given to the enemy. From the support of the landings in the West Carolines, the fast carriers of the Third Fleet returned to the Philippines. Consequent upon the revelation of the enemy's comparative weakness in the air during strikes early in September, an immediate decision had been made, to advance by some weeks the date of the assault on the Philippines, and a landing on Leyte Island was planned for 20th October.

On 21st and 22nd September, under cover of bad weather the carriers entered the waters to the eastward of Luzon and attacked Manila and other targets. Two days later their aircraft were in the Central Philippines, completing photographic coverage and reaching out as far as the Japanese anchorage at Koron Bay, in the Kalamian group. After a short period spent in replenishing at forward bases, the fast-carrier task force on 9th October recommenced the task of neutralizing as far as possible the hundred or more enemy airfields within striking distance of Leyte. These airfields were too numerous to be effectively neutralized, and too close to Formosa and Japan to be cut off. Nevertheless, the preliminary operations apparently had the effect of enabling the landings on Leyte to be made without difficulty by the American troops. On 20th October the operation for the recapture of the Philippines began.

2. The Allied Forces [1]

This great amphibious operation was under the supreme direction of General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur, Commander Southwest Pacific Area. His naval forces were under the command of Vice-Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid, Commander Seventh Fleet and Commander Allied Naval Forces, who formed

[1] The organization of the Naval tactical forces is given in Appendices A–E.

his Central Philippine Attack Force from units of the Seventh Fleet, greatly augmented by ships of the Pacific Fleet. The basic directive was embodied in Commander Seventh Fleet's Operational Order No. 13–44 : " This force will, by a ships-to-shore amphibious operation, transport, protect, land and support elements of the 6th Army in order to assist in the seizure, occupation and development of the Leyte area." This considerable force numbered more than 650 ships, including battleships, cruisers, destroyers, destroyer escorts, escort carriers, transports, cargo ships, landing craft, mine craft and supply vessels. It was divided into the Northern Attack Force (Seventh Amphibious Force, Rear-Admiral Barbey in command) and the Southern Attack Force (Third Amphibious Force, Vice-Admiral Wilkinson commanding) with the addition of surface and air cover groups, fire support, bombardment, minesweeping and supply groups. The tactical units of the Central Philippine Attack Force constituted the covering force, known as Task Force 77. Vice-Admiral Kinkaid, Commander Seventh Fleet, also commanded this task force, for which the principal role envisaged was bombardment, the Fire Support and Bombardment Group being comprised in Task Group 77·2 under Rear-Admiral J. B. Oldendorf with his flag in the cruiser *Louisville*. Together with the Close Covering Group, which during the Battle for Leyte Gulf, operated as an integral part of Rear-Admiral Oldendorf's force, it comprised six old battleships, four heavy cruisers, four light cruisers and 21 destroyers.[1] Close air support and air cover was provided by Task Group 77·4, consisting of 18 escort carriers with screen of nine destroyers and 14 destroyer escorts under Rear-Admiral T. L. Sprague, organized as three units.[1] The total aircraft complement of these 18 carriers was 448 machines.[2]

The operation was covered and supported by the Third Fleet and Western Pacific Task Forces, operating under Admiral W. F. Halsey, Jr. The latter operated under Admiral C. W. Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas.

General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz were each separately responsible for their particular tasks to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington.

The Commander-in-Chief U.S. Pacific Fleet's directives to the Commander Third Fleet are shown in the former's Operation Plan No. 8–44, briefed as follows :—

> " The Joint Chiefs of Staff have directed that C. in C. Pacific furnish necessary Fleet support to operations (including Leyte and Western Samar) by forces of the Southwest Pacific.
>
> Forces of Pacific Ocean Areas will cover and support forces of Southwest Pacific. Western Pacific Task Forces (Third Fleet) will destroy enemy naval and air forces in or threatening the Philippines Area, and protect the air and sea communications along the Central Pacific Axis. In case opportunity for destruction of major portions of the enemy fleet offers or can be created, such destruction becomes the primary task (of all P.O.A. forces). Necessary measures for detailed co-ordination of operations between the Western Pacific Task Forces and forces of the Southwest Pacific will be arranged by their respective Commanders."[3]

[1] *See* Appendix E.

[2] M.012980/44, *Leyte Operation, British Combined Observers' Report*, p. 9.

[3] Cincpac, *Report* pp. 56–7.

Admiral Halsey's command was a formidable one of six modern battleships, eight large and seven light aircraft carriers with a total complement of 987 aircraft,[1] six heavy and nine light cruisers, and 59 destroyers.[2] Its internal organization varied from time to time, according to its duties.

In order to ensure early detection of any approach of enemy naval forces, submarines were stationed to guard Brunei Bay, Balabak Strait (the southwest entrance to the Sulu Sea) and Mindoro Strait and Verde Island Passage (the northwestern entrances), and to the westward of Luzon, from Manila northwards. Their duties also included lifeguard services and the passing of weather reports.

Air searches from the recently-captured airfield on Morotai Island (Moluccas), reaching from Balabak Strait to Verde Island Passage, were extended to a radius of 1,000 miles for the operation. Air searches by Central Pacific forces from Palau in the West Carolines and Saipan in the Marianas were depended upon to supplement Third Fleet aircraft in giving early warning of any approach of enemy forces east of the Philippines.[3]

3. The Enemy Naval Forces. (*See* Appendix F)

The tactical forces of the Japanese Combined Fleet were re-organized shortly before the Allied landing on Leyte. The Third Fleet comprised the four carriers and two converted battleship carriers, *Ise* and *Hyuga*, with their screen, termed the main body of the mobile force or Attack Group. This fleet was based on Japan, and it was this fleet which in the battle for Leyte Gulf constituted the Northern Force. The majority of the remaining ships of the combined fleet were included in the Second Fleet (termed the First Diversion Attack Force), which was organized for the defence of the Philippines in two forces ; the Southern Force of two old battleships and one heavy cruiser, with destroyer screen ; and the Centre Force comprising the main surface fighting strength of the fleet. On account of shortage of oil in Japan, the home islands could not support the whole of their tactical forces, and the Second Fleet was consequently based on Singapore.

The Fifth Fleet (Second Diversion Attack Force), consisting of two cruiser squadrons (two heavy and two light cruisers) and a destroyer flotilla (one light cruiser and four destroyers), had been brought south from its station at Ominato in Northern Honshu, at the time of the air strikes on Formosa and the Pescadores by the American fast carriers on 12th and 13th October, in which the cruisers *Canberra* and *Houston* were torpedoed. It appears that the Japanese, believing exaggerated early reports from their airmen, hoped to be able to sink some American cripples, and to rescue some of their own downed aircrews ; but they found the Third Fleet too strong and consequently retired to Amami O Shima without becoming involved in an engagement.

4. The Japanese Plan

The defence of the Philippines was part of the plan known as Sho-Go (Sho Operations).[4] It was recognized that the defence of the archipelago could not succeed without the participation of the Combined Fleet. If the Philippines were lost, the southern shipping route, through which a trickle still ran, would be cut and the fleet would consequently be immobilized in Japan for lack of oil, or if it remained in the south, cut off from its ammunition supply. It was therefore decided to risk the entire fleet in one operation.

[1] M.012980/44, *Leyte Operation, British Combined Observers' Report*, p. 9.

[2] *See* Appendix A, D.

[3] Report of C.T.F. 77 (*Secret Information Bulletin No.* 22, p. 78–10).

[4] Defence plan for the area extending from the Philippines to Japan, inclusive.

The plan was designed to make the best use of the Japanese strength in heavy surface ships which at this date preponderated over their light forces and naval air forces, both of which had diminished through attrition. In the event of threat to the Philippines it was intended that the Southern and Centre Forces should advance from Lingga Anchorage (about 100 miles south of Singapore) to Brunei Bay (Borneo) or the northern Philippines, and time their sortie from here so as to reach the threatened landing beach at the same time as the Allied invasion force. Whilst endeavouring to avoid attack by the U.S. fast carriers, they were to fight through any surface opposition and destroy the assault convoys.

The Battle of the Marianas[1] in June, 1944, had broken Japan's carrier-borne air power. Three carriers had been sunk there and one seriously damaged, and the air groups of three carrier divisions were virtually annihilated. With the loss of over 300 carrier-borne aircraft, the Japanese lost the bulk of their trained carrier pilots, and the training of new pilots, increasingly hampered by lack of fuel, was still incomplete ; they were insufficiently trained to operate from carriers though trained well enough for operations from land bases. This dictated the future employment of naval air service. In planning, the Japanese High Command intended to use naval air units, flying carrier-borne types but operating mainly from land bases ; and in conformity with this, when the American pre-invasion air attacks began on the Philippines on 10th October a high proportion, said to be as much as half the carrier aircraft in training, were sent to reinforce Formosa and the Philippines.[2]

The plan of operations consisted of an attack from two directions on the invasion ships and supporting warships in Leyte Gulf, with a diversion which it was hoped would draw off the powerful American covering force (Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet) and facilitate the penetration of the Japanese attack to Leyte Gulf. The Japanese appear to have received fairly accurate intelligence, from air search on the 23rd, that there were in the Gulf some seven or eight American battleships with cruisers and destroyers appropriate to a balanced fleet, and torpedo boats at the entrance.

The attack on the invasion forces was to be carried out by the Second and Fifth Fleets, the former being divided into two detachments, Centre and Southern, for this operation. The Southern portion of the Force, termed by the Japanese, C Force or Third Group, under the command of Vice-Admiral Shoji Nishimura, consisted of the Second Battle Squadron (two battleships the *Yamashiro* and *Fuso*), the heavy cruiser *Mogami*, and the Fourth Destroyer Division reinforced (four destroyers). The force was to attack Leyte from the south, via the Surigao Strait. The Fifth Fleet (Second Diversion Attack Force) under Vice-Admiral Kiyohide Shima had also the mission of attacking from the south, though its commander was entirely independent both of Vice-Admiral Nishimura and of Vice-Admiral Kurita, Commander-in-Chief, Second Fleet, to whom Nishimura was subordinate.[3] At the time of this operation the Fifth Fleet comprised the 21st Cruiser Squadron (the heavy cruisers *Nachi* and *Ashigara*) and the First Destroyer Flotilla (the light cruiser *Abukuma* and four

[1] *The Campaigns of the Pacific War* terms it the Battle of the Philippine Sea.

[2] N.I.D. 10080/45, *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. B.S. No. 150) Nav. No. 36*, p. 150–2.

[3] It seems it had originally been intended that the Fifth Fleet should accompany the Northern (Carrier) Force, but an alteration was made when Admiral Shima moved south at the time of the American Third Fleet air attacks on Formosa. The alteration is said to have disorganized the communications of the Northern Force (*Report No. B.I.O.S./J.A.P./P.R./696*).

destroyers.[1] It seems that the decision to employ the Fifth Fleet was only taken at the last moment, and Shima at Amami O Shima and Nishimura at Lingga held no communication with one another previous to the operation, and consequently there was no consultation whatever between them on the subject.[2]

The Centre Force was to attack the invasion ships from the east, passing through San Bernardino Strait, down the east coast of Samar Island, and entering Leyte Gulf by the Suluan Island passage. The force was under Vice-Admiral Kurita's own command and comprised the bulk (first and second groups) of the Second Fleet, including the two modern battleships *Yamato* (flagship) and *Musashi*, and three older battleships, three cruiser squadrons (in all, ten heavy cruisers), and two destroyer flotillas each led by a light cruiser.

Combined Fleet Headquarters had at first appointed 22nd October as X-day, the date on which the Southern and Centre Forces should make their attacks on the U.S. forces in Leyte Gulf. However, Vice-Admiral Kurita reported that owing to the necessity of fuelling en route he could not attack before the 25th, and this date was accordingly adopted as X-day.

It was intended that the Southern and Centre Forces should attack Leyte Gulf about dawn on 25th October,[3] the Southern Force attacking first, about two hours before the Centre Force, since the waters of the Gulf were too confined for both forces to attack simultaneously.[4] The Fifth Fleet was to co-operate with or support Vice-Admiral Nishimura, and was apparently to deliver its attack after those of Nishimura and Kurita. There does not appear to have been a clear-cut plan of attack.[5] After the attack, both the Centre and Southern Forces were to retire via Surigao Strait.

The transfer of carrier aircraft of Air Groups 653 and 634 to Formosa and the Philippines on 10th October had left the carriers with so few aircraft, and those with their training still incomplete, that no more than 116 machines[6]

[1] The 16th (Cruiser) Squadron (*Tama* and *Kiso*) also belonged to the Fifth Fleet but were not with it in the present operation. The *Tama* accompanied the Northern (Carrier) Force.

[2] Under certain circumstances (set out in Combined Fleet S.M.S. 19220, which has not been seen) the Fifth Fleet was to be returned to the Northern Force for the operation. The procedure to be adopted by the Northern Force in that event is given in Mobile Force Des. Op. Ord. No. 62 (S.M.S. 200021) (see *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, p. 308). As it seems only of academic interest it is not reproduced here.

[3] Appendix M.I., C.-in.C. Combined Fleet S.M.S. 200813. Sunrise was at 0627.

[4] The evidence as to the exact timing of the attack is conflicting. S.M.S. 212053 from C.-in-C., Second Fleet orders the Southern Force to arrive at the East (sic) entrance to Surigao Strait at sundown on X-1 Day and " Break through " to the anchorage at dawn on X-Day, and the Centre Force to arrive in vicinity of Suluan Island at 0400 X-Day, " from whence break through to anchorage." The distance from Suluan I. to the landing beaches was about 60 miles.

[5] Vice-Admiral Kurita, in reply to questions whether his purpose was to attack the landing ships and the transports and cargo ships rather than the fighting ships, replied that he intended to attack both, giving preference to battleships. (N.I.D. 10056/45, p. 47–26.) His Chief of Staff, Rear-Admiral Koyanagi, stated that stress would have been laid on the transports (N.I.D. 10079/45, p. 149–5). His Staff Officer (Operations), Commander Otano, stated that the targets for the operation, in order of importance, were carriers, transports, surface warships (N.I.D. 10086/45, p. 170–7). C.-in-C., Combined Fleet S.M.S. 200813 ordered the U.S. surface forces to be destroyed first, and then the landing forces.

[6]

Ship-based fighters	52
Ship-based fighter bombers	28
Torpedo bombers	25
Bombers	7
Ship-based attack (torpedo) aircraft	4
Total	116
Oyodo float reconnaissance	2

were available for the Third Fleet, Vice-Admiral Ozawa's carrier (northern) force, from the Groups 653 and 634 and such of those of Air Group 601 as were capable of operating from carriers. These were loaded on board the four carriers of the 3rd Squadron during the morning of 20th October at Oita air base, and apart from the meagre attack thus rendered possible the Japanese Third Fleet was relegated to the role of decoy to draw off the American fast carriers and enable Vice-Admiral Kurita's detachments to get through to the invasion beaches.[1] Ozawa was not optimistic of success, for the only previous precedent was the Battle of the Marianas, where the American task force refused to be drawn from the proximity of the invasion forces until the Japanese carriers had been rendered impotent. The force was to leave the Inland Sea and arrive north-east of the Philippines on X-2 to X-1 Day and commence its attack with the few aircraft remaining to it.

Vice-Admirals Kurita and Ozawa were both directly responsible to Admiral Toyoda, Commander of the Combined Fleet. Vice-Admiral Shima's immediate superior was the Commander-in-Chief South-west Area Fleet, Vice-Admiral Mikawa, at Manila, who was responsible to Admiral Toyoda.[2] The latter had his headquarters in Japan, and consequently exercised little control once the operation had begun, although the co-ordinating command rested with him.[3] In practice, the only co-ordination of this complicated operation which actually took place, was by communication between the units concerned ; and this channel failed to fulfil its function.

In view of the importance of maintaining accurate co-ordination, the communications plan had been very carefully made and special radio channels provided ; but, in the event, restrictions on communication and the need for radio silence rendered co-ordination between the Second Fleet and the carriers in the north almost impossible.[4]

The employment of submarines in the defence of the Philippines was envisaged in the Sho Plan, and some seven were disposed in the sector between north-east and south-east of Leyte, and three off Lamon Bay on the east side of Mindanao. However, it seems that only three reached the Leyte area by the 25th October, though all 10 of the submarines had arrived by next day.[5]

The employment of shore-based aircraft to attack the American fleet was an important part of the Japanese plan.[6] At the time of the American landing on Leyte, the land-based naval aircraft in the Philippines, consisting of the First (Navy) Air Fleet, commanded by Vice-Admiral Onishi, had been reduced much below establishment as the result of American attacks ; for in October, 1944, alone, the Japanese lost from carrier air strikes approximately as many aircraft as broke the German Air Force during the two months of the

[1] Vice-Admiral Ozawa stated in interrogation that he wished his fleet and Kurita's to be combined for the operation, but the Allied attack came before the training of the carriers was completed.

[2] The chain of command is shown in Appendix F.

[3] N.I.D. 10056/45 *Interrogation* of Vice-Admiral Kurita, *No. (U.S.S. B.S. No. 47), Nav. No. 9*, p. 47–40. In N.I.D. 10080/45, p. 150–9, it is stated that Admiral Toyoda, not being informed as to the situation did not attempt to direct the operation whilst in progress but merely gave the general orders " to attack and return." This statement is discussed in footnote 2, p. 102.

[4] N.I.D. 10086/45, *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. B.S. 170), Nav. No. 41.*

[5] *Interrogation Nav. No. 72 U.S.S. B.S. No. 366, Vice-Admiral Shigeyosh Miwa, C.-in-C. Sixth (Submarine) Fleet.*

[6] Supplement to Imperial Headquarters Directive 431, 21st July, 1944 quoted in *The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, pp. 292–3.

Battle of Britain in the late summer of 1940.[1] Most of the Second (Navy) Air Fleet at Formosa, under Vice-Admiral Shigeru Fukudome, was in consequence moved to the Philippines on 22nd October, and the two air fleets were united to form the Combined Base Air Force. All naval air forces in the Philippines were placed under the command of the Commander-in-Chief South-west Area Fleet, Vice-Admiral Mikawa.[2]

During the summer, 1944, army air units had been subordinated to naval command in Hokkaido and in the Hainan-Formosa area, but no unified air command was established in the Philippines.

The majority of the 450 aircraft of the Second Air Fleet flew from Formosa to Clark Field, near Manila, on the 23rd October. They apparently had orders to attack the American fast carriers on the way, but failed to find them on account of bad weather.

In all, about 600 shore-based Japanese aircraft were available in the Philippines.

The operation had a limited object, namely, to delay the American landing for two or three days.[3] There appears to have been no plan to exploit this delay, and indeed no great expectation of success ; but to the Japanese with their inferiority in ships and aircraft it seemed to offer the best hope. In particular, it was understood from the beginning, before the plan was put into operation, that they had insufficient aircraft ; and this was perhaps one of the basic causes of failure.

The Japanese apparently received warning from their shore observers on the same day, 17th October, that the Americans landed on Dinagat Island, at the entrance to Leyte Gulf, in preparation for the main landing on Leyte Island.[4] The Japanese fleet was then set in motion as planned. Vice-Admiral Kurita moved with the Second Fleet to Brunei Bay where he arrived on 21st October, and issued his orders.[5] After fuelling, the fleet sailed on 22nd in two detachments, making a wide swing to the north-westward from Brunei, to avoid suspected submarine areas.[6] The Centre Force, under Kurita, left first, about 0800, and proceeded up the Palawan Passage, whilst Nishimura sailed in the afternoon and steamed through the Balabak Strait into the Sulu Sea, where he made a considerable diversion to the northward, in order to avoid air search from Morotai, before making for the Mindanao Sea and Surigao Strait. The Fifth Fleet was brought from Amami O Shima to Bako, and from thence to Koron Bay in the Kalamian group of islands on the south side of Mindoro Strait, for fuelling, and it sailed from here very early on the morning of the 24th by the route west of Negros, to carry out its mission at Leyte. One tanker was sent to Koron Bay, and two tankers from Singapore

[1] Op. cit., p. 282.

[2] *See* Appendix M.I., 211533. But Vice-Admiral Fukudome stated in interrogation that he took command of the Combined Base Air Force, with Vice-Admiral Onishi as his Chief of Staff (*Interrogation Nav. No. 115, U.S.S. B.S. No. 503*).

[3] *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. B.S. No. 47), Nav. No. 9*, p. 47–26.

[4] N.I.D. 10080/45, *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. B.S. No. 150), Nav. No. 36*, p. 150–4, where it is further stated that the Japanese on 18th intercepted an American telephone message from which they learnt that landing was to be made south of Tacloban on Leyte Island.

[5] Appendix M.II, Second Fleet S.M.S. 212053.

[6] *See* Plan 1.

were brought into the Sulu Sea. Apparently, the tanker was not at Koron Bay when the Fifth Fleet arrived; consequently the cruisers had to supply fuel for the destroyers and the resulting shortage had an effect on the subsequent operation.

5. Appreciation of the Enemy's Reaction to the Leyte Landing

The American estimate of the enemy's strength and dispositions at the end of September differed somewhat from actuality and was as follows[1]:—

	Formosa–Japan	*Singapore Area*
Battleships	3	4
Battleship carriers	2	—
Carriers	6	—
Light carriers	5	—
Escort carriers	3	1
Armoured cruisers	4	11
Light cruisers	7	several
Destroyers	about 20	about 20

It was recognized by the U.S. Commander South-west Pacific, that the strategic result of capturing the Philippines would be decisive.[2] Nevertheless, the intelligence appreciation upon which his forces were working,[3] anticipated but slight possibility of strong Japanese naval re-action to the landings at Leyte,[4] a view which was not, however, entirely shared by the Third Fleet, by whom some reaction was expected.[5]

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[1] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 55.

[2] General MacArthur, 20th October, 1944.

[3] Commander Allied Naval Forces, S.W.P.A. Operation Plan 13–44.

[4] M.0632/45 *U.S.S. " Mississippi ", Battle of Surigao Strait, 25th October, 1944*, p. 7. In M.012980/44, p. 3, the British Combined Operations Observers S.W. Pacific Area state: " It was not believed that major elements of the Japanese Fleet would be involved in the present operations, but that fast Task Forces might strike at our supply lines taking full advantage of darkness, surprise and land-based air."

[5] M.0237/45 *Battle of the Philippines, Action Report C.T.G. 38.3, 24th/25th October, 1944*, p. 2. The Third Fleet operated under Commander Western Pacific Task Force Op. Plan 14–44.

CHAPTER II

THE ENEMY APPROACH

(See Plan 1)

6. Fragmentary Sighting Reports of 21st and 22nd October

The only considerable information of the enemy available prior to 21st October was of small craft movements, from which it was inferred that reinforcement of the west coast of Leyte by small craft was occurring or about to occur.[1] 21st and 22nd Oct.

On 21st October large enemy warships were sighted to the north, west and south of Leyte, but all sightings were indefinite. There was no evidence of a movement towards the Philippines: but rather the reverse, in fact.[2]

Sightings on 22nd provided no more satisfactory basis for an appreciation of the enemy's intentions. In the Luzon Strait, south of Formosa, a southbound force of some half a dozen ships was sighted at midnight 21st/22nd and was attacked,[3] two hits being reported. During the day, various other sightings occurred in the area north-west of Luzon which seemed to suggest that forces, including heavy cruisers, were moving towards Manila.[4] But these contact reports were deprived of much of their significance because it was thought they were connected with the abortive sortie of the Japanese Fifth Fleet a few days earlier. It was difficult now to determine whether the ships were retiring, re-forming, or standing by.[5]

In the south sightings on 21st and 22nd were equally fragmentary and uncertain.[6]

7. Seventh Fleet Blocks the Approaches to Leyte Gulf, 22nd October

Indeterminate though the sightings were, Rear-Admiral Oldendorf, commanding Task Group 77.2, decided already on 22nd to form a battle disposition to defend Leyte Gulf. Under his orders was the force which had been supplying covering fire for the landings in the gulf, namely, six old battleships, three heavy and two light cruisers and destroyers.[7] On Vice-Admiral Kinkaid's instructions, his ships were remaining in the area south of a line drawn through the centre of Leyte Gulf in lat. 10° 46′ N. Rear-Admiral Oldendorff now stationed his light forces on an east-west line, four miles east of Taytay Point (10° 42′ N., 125° 07′ E.), speed 5 knots, with his heavy forces and destroyer screen to the North-westward, south of lat. 10° 46′ N.[8] He expected the attack, if it came, to be via the southern entrance to the Surigao Strait[9] and it was to this area that he was paying the most attention. 22nd Oct.

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[1] M.0632/45, *U.S.S. " Mississippi ", Battle of Surigao Strait, 25th October, 1944*, p. 8.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Presumably by U.S. submarines.

[4] M.0632/45, *U.S.S. " Mississippi ", Battle of Surigao Strait, 25th October, 1944*, Sighting Reports Plan on p. 25.

[5] M.0632/45, *U.S.S. " Mississippi ", Battle of Surigao Strait, 25th October, 1944*, p. 8.

[6] The plan of sighting reports 22nd/24th October in M.0632/45 includes a single sighting at 211115 of one battleship, three light cruisers, three destroyers and six unidentified ships east of Tarakan, course 170°, speed 15 knots. Three large unidentified warships are shown at 220000 in about 07° 15′ N., 115° 30′ E. course 020° speed 21 knots, but this is the only known sighting of units of the Singapore force.

[7] *See* Appendix E.

[8] Battle Disposition of the (U.S.) A–1 type.

[9] *Secret Information Bulletin No. 22*, comment by C.T.G. 77.2, p. 78–14.

8. First Contact with the Japanese Main Battle Fleet,[1] 0200/23rd October

23rd Oct. However, in effect it was not Rear-Admiral Oldendorf but Admiral Halsey who first became involved, nor was there long to wait for definite news of the enemy. Early on the morning of 23rd October a report came in from a submarine of radar contact on three possible battleships at 0200 steering 040° at 15 knots in 08° 20′ N. 116° 20′ E., at the southern entrance to the Palawan Passage, the narrow channel between Palawan Island and the unsurveyed Dangerous Ground to the westward.[2] An hour later a submarine reported a force of 11 fighting ships in the lower part of the Passage in 08° 47′ N. 116° 37′ E. at 0300, course 039°, speed 15 knots.[3]

These reports came from the American submarines *Darter* and *Dace*, and they appear to have been the first definite indication that the Japanese forces had left Singapore.[4]

9. Sinking of the "Atago" and "Maya", 0630–0700 23rd October

23rd Oct. The submarines *Darter* and *Dace* shadowed and attacked the enemy ships as they proceeded up the Palawan Passage, nor were they long in coming into action. At 0630 the *Darter*, in 09° 24′ N., 117° 11′ E. reported three battleships, four heavy cruisers, and three other vessels, and that she had obtained four torpedo hits on one *Atago* class cruiser and damaged a second.[5] Half an hour later, the *Dace*, in 09° 29′ N. 117° 20′ E. reported 11 ships, including three battleships, two heavy cruisers, and a carrier, and that she had obtained four torpedo hits on a *Kongo* class battleship.[6]

The enemy force encountered by the submarines belonged to Vice-Admiral Kurita's Centre Force, comprising the five most modern battleships, 10 heavy cruisers, with light cruiser and destroyer screen.[7] The ships hit were three of the four heavy cruisers of the Fourth Cruiser Squadron, two of which, the *Atago* and the *Maya*, were sunk and the third, the *Takao*, was badly damaged and had to be sent back to Singapore via Brunei, escorted by two destroyers.[8]

At the time of the attack, the enemy force was cruising in line ahead in two columns, disposed abeam to starboard. Evidence as to the disposition of the ships within the columns and of the screening ships is contradictory, but it is clear that the Fourth Cruiser Squadron in the order *Atago* (fleet flagship), *Takao*, *Chokai*, led the port column, whilst the Fifth Cruiser Squadron (*Myoko* and *Haguro*) with the *Maya* from the Fourth Cruiser Squadron, in that order, composed the van of the starboard column.

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[1] Termed in this narrative the Centre Force.

[2] Report of C.T.F. 77 quoted in *Secret Information Bulletin No. 22*, p. 78–10. The sighting reports plan in M.0632/45 shows the enemy's speed as 18 knots. Cincpac, p. 57, gives the 0200 position as 08° 28′ N., 116° 30′ E.

[3] Report of C.T.F. 77, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–10.

[4] U.S.S. "*Mississippi*", *Battle of Surigao Strait*, M.0632/45, p. 8.

[5] Report of C.T.F. 77, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–10. This incident is not recorded on Sighting Reports Plan in M.0632/45, which shows a sinking (not recorded by C.T.F. 77) at 0430 of an *Atago* class cruiser in position 50 miles 040° from the 0300 sighting (the plan is too small for accurate plotting of positions). This may be the cruiser on which *Darter* at 0630 reported she had obtained four hits.

[6] Report of C.T.F. 77, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–10, and M.0632/45, Sighting Reports Plan.

[7] This was its full strength (*see* Appendix F) before attack by the submarines.

[8] Apparently the *Takao* was hit in the stern and unable to navigate. *Takao* was almost certainly the damaged cruiser sighted with two destroyers heading South-west at four knots approaching the southern exit of the Palawan Passage in the early hours of 24th October. (Message G.H.Q.S.W.P.A. 250855 Oct., Naval War Diary.)

23rd Oct. The Japanese fleet was zigzagging at 18 knots and had just completed a turn to port when the first attack occurred. This was made, apparently, by the *Darter*, from a position fine on the starboard bow of the leading ship of the port column, the fleet flagship *Atago*. Four torpedoes hit the *Atago* and two the *Takao*, second ship in the column.

On the alarm being given, the starboard column turned to starboard, but resumed the course within ten minutes. Almost immediately the second attack occurred, delivered by the *Dace*, from a position broad on the port bow of the Fifth Cruiser Squadron. The change of course of the enemy apparently saved the leading ships, but the *Maya*, which was last ship in the column, was hit by four torpedoes and sank almost immediately.

The Japanese were aware of the presence of American submarine patrols on this route. In planning the operation they had considered three possible routes. First, the most southerly, which would bring their forces under the attack of land based air from Morotai in the Halmaheras; second, the most northerly route, which was too long; and third, the route adopted. Considering the time and other factors, it was decided to proceed by the middle route.[1]

Before the *Atago* sank half an hour after being hit, the Vice-Admiral and his staff transferred first to the destroyer *Kishinami* and subsequently (at 1623) to the battleship *Yamato*, flagship of the Commander of the First (Battle) Squadron and Second-in-Command of the Second Fleet.[2] The position of sinking of the *Atago* is given as 9° 28′ N., 117° 17′ E.

At 231026 a signal was sent to the Commander-in-Chief Combined Fleet, Mobile Fleet, South-west Area Fleet and Chief of the Naval General Staff, informing them of the situation.[3]

10. Loss of U.S.S. "Darter", 24th October

Unfortunately, the *Darter*, whilst manœuvring into position for a further attack on the Centre Force, grounded on Bombay Shoal in 09° 26′ N., 116° 56′ E., in the middle of the Palawan Passage, and had to be abandoned next day. The Japanese subsequently boarded the vessel, but found that all useful gear had been destroyed by the crew.[4] This was the only U.S. submarine to fall into Japanese hands during the war.

11. Centre Force enters Mindoro Strait, night 23rd–24th October

23rd Oct. Vice-Admiral Kurita's force was sighted once more on 23rd. At 2130 the American submarine *Angler* in the approaches to Mindoro Strait in 13° 00′ N., 119° 30′ E., reported 15 to 20 ships, including three probable battleships, on an easterly course at 18 knots.[5] They were tracked into the Mindoro Strait,

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[1] N.I.D. 10056/45, p. 47–7.

[2] N.I.D. 10056/45, *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. B.S. No. 47)*, *Nav. No. 9*, p. 47–7, states that the control was improved by the change, although on p. 47–23 it is stated that when the flag was shifted the communications personnel were divided between two destroyers, one of which was sent back to Brunei with the *Takao*. Vice-Admiral Kurita's operations officer stated that the shift of flag did not interfere much with the operation (N.I.D. 10066, p. 170–2). Rear-Admiral Koyanagi, Chief of Staff to Vice-Admiral Kurita, states that half the communications personnel was killed in the torpedoing of the *Atago* (N.I.D. 10079/45, p. 149–2).

[3] Appendix M.II.

[4] *Japanese Submarine Operations*, U.S. Naval Technical Mission to Japan, February, 1946.

[5] Report of C.T.F. 77 (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–11). The sighting reports plan in M.0632/45 shows four large ships, course 050°.

and at 240030 and again at 240330 two possible carriers were (incorrectly) reported with the three battleships.[1]

12. Cruiser Force reported coming from the North, 0340, 23rd October

23rd Oct.

Simultaneously with these reports of enemy ships proceeding up the Palawan Passage there came reports of contact with a Japanese cruiser force coming down from the northward. At 0340 on 23rd, the submarine *Bream* reported a force of at least two heavy cruisers and several destroyers to the westward of Luzon, in 14° 05′ N., 119° 43′ E. steering at a speed of 10 knots a course for the Verde Island Passage, the northern entrance to the Sibuyan Sea. This was, no doubt, the Japanese Fifth Fleet. The *Bream* reported (apparently incorrectly) one hit on an *Aoba* class cruiser.[2] Two *Aoba* class heavy cruisers (one of them with two hits) and a destroyer were reported 50 minutes later, at 0430 on 23rd, in the same position, steering a course for Manila Bay.[3]

13. Contacts in the South, 23rd October

Still further to confirm the violence of the enemy's reaction to the invasion of the Philippines there came contact reports from the southward also. A light cruiser and a destroyer were sighted at 0915 approaching the northern exit of the Macassar Strait from the south-east; two destroyers were seen at 1030 on a south-westerly course off the southern tip of Cebu Island; and in the central part of the Sulu Sea a group composed of one armoured and two light cruisers and four destroyers was reported at 1155 on 23rd in 09° 30′ N., 120° 30′ E. steering an E. by S. course at slow speed.[4] This latter force, though it was not known at the time, was probably the Japanese Fifth Fleet, consisting of the heavy cruisers *Nachi* and *Ashigara*, light cruiser *Abukuma*, and four destroyers, which left Koron Bay on the morning of the 24th, to support or co-operate with the, as yet, undiscovered Japanese Southern Force, south of Negros, late on the 24th.

14. The Fast Carriers move into Position for Search, night 23rd–24th October

3rd Fleet night 23rd Oct.

From the multiplicity of sighting reports on 23rd October Vice-Admiral Kinkaid was fairly certain that the Japanese intended an attack on the ships off Leyte, probably through the Surigao Strait.[5] He estimated that the large force moving up the Palawan Passage and the cruiser force reported by the *Bream* to be making for the Verde Island Passage might refuel in the neighbourhood of Koron Bay;[6] the cruiser force could arrive there about 2080/23rd and the other, larger enemy force about 0100/24th.

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[1] M.0632/45, sighting reports plan, and message G.H.Q.S.W.P.A. 240815Z (Naval War Diary).

[2] Report of C.T.F. 77 (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–10).

[3] M.0632/45, Sighting Reports Plan, where they are incorrectly called two light cruisers (*Aoba*). The Admiralty class these 7·87-in. gun vessels as cruisers. The Americans term them heavy cruisers (C.A.s). The Sighting Reports Plan shows also "one *Nachi* (heavy cruiser) damaged 240800" at the entrance to Manila Bay and a *Natori* (light cruiser) damaged 240725 in Manila.

[4] M.0632/45, Sighting Reports Plan. It is believed that the date of the 1155 Report is in error, and that it should be 24th (*see* Note 1, p. 42).

[5] Report of C.T.F. 77, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–11.

[6] The Centre Force did not do so.

22nd/24th Oct.

To Admiral Halsey, it was evident that the Japanese were preparing to make a major effort, though their intentions were not clear. He accordingly decided to initiate carrier searches to obtain earliest information of any enemy movement towards Leyte.[1]

The U.S. Third Fleet[2] operating as Task Force 38 east of the Philippines, fuelled on 22nd in the general area 300 miles east of Luzon. One of the four groups of the force, Task Group 38.1, consisting of five carriers with a support unit of cruisers and a destroyer screen, under Vice-Admiral McCain left for the U.S. base at Ulithi in the West Carolines in 09° 47′ N., 139° 41′ E. at 1800 on 22nd for replenishment. During the night 23rd–24th, after the enemy reports came in from the U.S. submarines off Palawan and Mindoro, Admiral Halsey moved his remaining three task groups, comprising 11 carriers, with supporting battleships and cruisers, to the west, towards Luzon, in readiness for strikes next day. At daybreak on 24th they were lined up about 125 miles apart, with Task Group 38.3 under Rear-Admiral Sherman in the northern position in about 15° 00′ N., 123° 30′ E., 60 miles east of Polillo Island; Task Group 38.2 (Rear-Admiral Bogan) in the centre, off the San Bernardino Strait; and Task Group 38.4 (Rear-Admiral Davison) in the southern position, off Samar. Vice-Admiral McCain with Task Group 38.1 was now several hundred miles to the eastward on his way to Ulithi.

Central Pacific searches had reported no contacts in their areas of search to the north and north-east of Task Force 38 during 23rd October.[3]

Throughout the night of 23rd–24th October single enemy reconnaissance aircraft, probably from Luzon, were almost constantly in the vicinity of the northernmost Task Group, 38.3.[4] Night fighters were kept in the air and held most of these enemy aircraft at a distance. At one time, shortly before dawn, there were five separate Japanese on the flagship *Essex's* screen on widely different bearings, and it was thought that the enemy was well aware of the position of the northern Task Group, if not of the others.[4]

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[1] Commander Third Fleet Report, quoted, in part, in *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22* p. 78–12.

[2] For composition *see* Appendices A, D.

[3] M.03212/45, *C.T.F. 34, Report of Operations in Philippines Area, 6th October/3rd November, 1944*, p. 1.

[4] M.0327/45, *Battle of the Philippines, Action Report C.T.G. 38.3* [Rear-Admiral Sherman], *24th/25th October, 1944*, p. 3. Captain Ohmae, Chief of Staff to Vice-Admiral Ozawa states that the Japanese Northern Force, did not locate Task Group 38.3 until 0700 on 24th although it sent out search aircraft daily from 22nd inclusive. (N.I.D. 10080/45, p. 150–4.)

CHAPTER III

AIR ATTACK ON THE THIRD FLEET CARRIERS, 24th OCTOBER

15. Dawn Search and Attack Units Launched, 24th October

Dawn 24th Oct.

Vice-Admiral Mitscher, Commander, Task Force 38, had ordered "reinforced search teams," consisting of four bomber and four fighter aircraft to be launched at dawn on 24th to cover the Sibuyan Sea and the area from Mindoro Strait in the south to Lingayen Gulf on the west side of Luzon, in the north.[1] Their objective was major units of the Japanese fleet and they were intended as both search and attack units. Both the fighters and bombers carried bombs, and they were launched soon after 0600. In addition, the *Essex* sent off a 20-aircraft fighter sweep to attack enemy aircraft in the neighbourhood of the Manila airfields. A deck load strike was ordered ready on deck of each carrier to strike any enemy units reported by the search.[2] These activities occupied a considerable proportion of the fighter aircraft of the carriers. There remained a barely adequate number to escort the ready strike, and a modest number for combat air patrol over the group.[3]

No search to the north or north-east of Luzon was ordered, consequently the Japanese carrier force coming down from the north remained undetected though within aircraft range. The omission had a definite effect on the rest of the day's action.[4]

16. Air Raid on Task Group 38.3, 0800, 24th October

0800 24th Oct.

The first enemy sightings were made by aircraft of Task Group 38.2 who reported, just before 0800, four battleships, eight armoured cruisers and escorts heading into the Sibuyan Sea from south of Mindoro Island. The report was intercepted by the *Essex*, flagship of Rear-Admiral Sherman, commanding Task Group 38.3, consisting of the carriers *Essex* and *Lexington*, light carriers *Princeton* and *Langley*, and screen,[5] who made immediate preparations to launch a strike against the enemy. However, at 0800, just before it could be launched a group of about 40 Japanese aircraft was reported to be closing on a bearing 250°; and a second large group was shortly afterwards reported closing behind the first.

These first attacks came from Luzon, for although shore-based aircraft had reported the enemy to the Japanese Northern Force at 0820, the distance was too great for attacks by the Japanese carriers until it had narrowed. The preponderance of carrier types amongst the aircraft was due to the transfer of aircraft in training from the carrier force to the Philippines.

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[1] *Essex* launched two teams to search 225° to 245° true, *Lexington* states that she launched five teams to search 10° sectors from 245° to 285° true (? four teams or 245° to 295°) for a distance of 300 miles. In addition, each of these two ships launched one team of four fighter aircraft to act as relay aircraft for contact reports. (M.01571/45, *U.S.S. "Lexington", Action Report*, p. 5).

[2] These details are taken from the reports of C.T.G. 38.3 and *Lexington* and doubtless did not apply to the light carriers. The aircraft complement of *Lexington* on 24th October was 32 fighters, two night fighters, two patrol aircraft, 18 torpedo aircraft, three bombers.

[3] M.03237/45. *Battle of the Philippines, Action Report C.T.G. 38.3,24th/25th October, 1944*, p. 3.

[4] Ibid. c.f. Section 24.

[5] *See* Appendix A.

At the time, Task Group 38.3 had combat air patrol of 12 fighter aircraft overhead and an anti-submarine patrol of four fighters and four bombers. This number was considered insufficient to deal with the major air attack which was thought to be pending. Accordingly, at 0805, 12 additional fighters each were scrambled from the *Langley* and the *Princeton*, and seven from the *Essex*. Within a few minutes a third large enemy raid appeared on the screen bearing 240° 60 miles. This turned out to be the largest of the three raids, a group of 50 to 80 enemy aircraft divided about evenly between dive bombers, torpedo aircraft and fighters.[1] To meet it, at 0831 the *Lexington* was ordered to launch her remaining 12 fighters.[2] The *Essex's* Manila fighter sweep was also recalled just as it was arriving over Manila, where it attacked and damaged one of three ships near Bataan.[3] These aircraft returned too late to take part in the battle. Meanwhile, Rear-Admiral Sherman was left with insufficient fighters to escort the strike which it had been his intention to send off against the Japanese fleet in the Sibuyan Sea before the increasing enemy attacks got in too close.

0800–0930 24th Oct.

To avoid the oncoming air attack Rear-Admiral Sherman manœuvred his Task Group to keep within shelter of the rain squalls in the area, emerging into the clear only to launch additional aircraft or land machines requiring fuel and ammunition. "We were kept pretty busy with the attack for the next several hours," he writes.

A mêlée soon developed. No directions could be given to the aircraft once they reported "tally-ho." Every available fighter was sent up. Commander David McCampbell, the *Essex* Air Group Commander led seven fighters into the large third raid; he shot down nine of the enemy, his wing-man got six, and the remaining pilots got nine between them—a total of 24. The *Lexington's* fighters shot down 13 for the loss of a single fighter.

17. The "Princeton" hit, 0939/24th

0938 24th Oct.

After an hour and a half there was a lull in the fighting. By this time many of the fighters were short of ammunition and fuel, and had to be landed. Thanks to their efficient performance and Rear-Admiral Sherman's handling of the Task Group no organized group of enemy aircraft had reached the ships.

About 0938 Task Group 38.3 emerged to the edge of a rain squall in 15° 22′ N., 123° 47′ E. to land the fighters which needed reservicing. No enemy were showing on the flagship's screen within 50 miles. The *Princeton*, to land her fighters, had put her torpedo aircraft which were ready for deck

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[1] This account of the air battle is based mainly on the report of C.T.G. 38.3 (M.0237/45). The only other carrier's report available is *Lexington's*, which contains an Air Operations Narrative and a Fighter Director Narrative which do not agree with one another. The former mentions only one raid, the latter mentions two, one reported at 0730 and the second at 0805. The 0805 raid appears to be what Admiral Sherman terms the third raid, *Lexington* evidently referring to the second raid as a portion of Raid One of later discovery. Although *Lexington* calls her second (Rear-Admiral Sherman's third) raid a "large group of bogies," her aircraft made tally-ho on only an estimated 20 to 30 enemy aircraft. It is possible, however, that the raid was broken up before her fighters, ordered to be launched at 0831, arrived; for *Essex*'s fighters, who shot down 24 of the enemy in this raid, had 26 minutes' start of *Lexington's*.

[2] *Lexington's* fighter Director Narrative does not say how many fighters were launched, merely that "*Lexington* planes were vectored out against this raid" (M.01571/45, p. 11). Her track chart shows scramble No. 1 launched at 0801 and scramble No. 2 at 1301, with the delayed strike on the enemy in the Sibuyan Sea at 1050. Her Air Operations Narrative states that 11 fighters were launched when the 0800 raid was detected, but mentions no further scramble nor any other raid.

[3] M.01571/45, *U.S.S. "Lexington," Action Report on the engagement of enemy fleet units in the Sibuyan Sea on 24th October and East of Luzon on 25th October, 1944*, p. 5. The report of C.T.G. 38.3. makes no mention of this.

24th Oct. load strike and armed with torpedoes on the hangar deck. Suddenly, a single enemy aircraft, a Judy, apparently unnoticed by most of the ships[1] amongst the returning friendly fighters, dived out of the low clouds over the *Princeton* and put a small bomb through her flight deck amidships. The A.A. cruiser *Reno*, on the *Princeton's* port quarter fired at the Judy and possibly damaged it, and it is believed to have been the Judy which was later shot down by one of the *Lexington's* fighters.

The bomb started a small fire on the hangar deck. Heavy black smoke came from amidships of the *Princeton* and she commenced to slow and lost position in the formation which was proceeding at 24 knots at the time. At 0947 she turned out of formation, and C.T.G. 38.3, drawing clear with the rest of his ships, ordered the *Reno* and destroyers *Cassin Young*, *Gatling* and *Irwin* to stand by her. It seemed to Rear-Admiral Sherman, however, that there was little to fear from one small bomb hitting a ship of the ability and strength of the *Princeton*, and that having warded off a major air attack with only one of the enemy getting into the disposition and only one small bomb hit, the Task Group had come off exceedingly well.

About 1001 the *Princeton*, with her flight deck burning furiously, asked the destroyers circling her to pour water into her fire. Almost simultaneously, an explosion occurred on board and about four minutes later a second took place in the after part of the carrier. Further explosions soon occurred. A large fire was raging through the hangar deck and around the island. Smoke was so dense, black and heavy that at times the ship was completely obscured. She lost all way, took a position across the wind, drifting to leeward. Men could be seen abandoning ship,[2] but the work of rescue and assistance was hampered by enemy aircraft who now returned to the attack. The *Reno* quitted the scene for some minutes, to fight off the threat with the *Gatling* and the Combat Air Patrol. Two of the enemy were shot down ; one of them, near-missing the *Langley* with a bomb, crashed astern.

About 1030 the light cruiser *Birmingham*, despatched by Rear-Admiral Sherman, joined the group round the *Princeton*, and her Captain, T. B. Inglis, took charge of the operations. The destroyer *Morrison* was also sent. Enemy aircraft were still attacking, but the C.A.P. held them at a distance.

By noon the fire fighting had effected an improvement on board the *Princeton*. It was only temporary, however, for at 1411 the carrier was again smoking heavily. It was raining now, visibility was very poor, as low as 100 yards at times, the wind was about 20 knots, the sea moderate to rough. Once again, enemy aircraft were reported. The Task Group, though in communication, were some miles away, engaged on their own business.

Owing to her build, the carrier made more leeway than the lighter craft, consequently it was difficult to keep a ship alongside on the windward (port) side without a line to keep the ships together and causing damage through the crashing of the carrier's projecting sponsons in the seaway. At the *Princeton's* request, each of the ships in turn had gone alongside to leeward[3] in the dense

[1] Two of them noticed it, however. *Gatling* (M.0120/45, p. 9) states—" 0935 *Santa Fe* reported dive bomber bearing 160° (T) coming down." *Santa Fe* (M.01553/45, p. 11) states—" 0929 Bogie at 255, 6."

[2] About 1010 the order " Salvage Control, Phase I," which called for all but 490 men to abandon ship, was given, and about 10 minutes later gun crews were also ordered to leave when ammunition in ready service rooms and lockers began to explode.

[3] The C.O. U.S.S. *Birmingham* states (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–93), that he left it to the discretion of the Commanding Officers to comply with *Princeton's* request if they considered it feasible, but through some misunderstanding the qualification was not transmitted and the directive to these ships was received by them as an unqualified order.

smoke and heat, but their fire hoses were ineffective up-wind and both the *Morrison* and *Irwin* had been badly, and the *Reno* slightly, damaged in the attempt. 24th Oct.

It was clear to Captain Inglis that the only thing to be done was to use his ship as the fire fighter and the others as screen and A.A. support.[1] Ordering the *Reno* to prepare to tow (1445),[2] he put his ship alongside the *Princeton's* port side. There were not enough men left on board the *Princeton* to handle the hoses, so volunteers from the *Birmingham* clambered aboard with hoses which they led down into the hangar. The *Birmingham* had to cast off once, in order to deal with Japanese aircraft reported to have broken through the screen and with a submarine contact reported 2000 yards away ;[3] but at 1512 Captain Inglis returned and again put his ship alongside.

18. Sinking of the " Princeton " 1750 24th October

About 12 minutes later the *Princeton's* after magazines exploded, blowing off her stern and the after part of her flight deck, and hurling fragments and debris over a wide area. Not a single officer or man still on board is known to have escaped injury of some sort in the tremendous blast.[4] Aboard the *Birmingham* the carnage was even more terrible. Her upper deck, crowded with men fighting the fire and manning the A.A. guns was raked from stem to stern. Over half of her officers and men were in a moment killed or injured.[5] " It is impossible, even remotely, adequately to describe the grisly scene of human fragmentation ", wrote her Executive Officer, who took over the command from the badly-wounded Captain. Nevertheless, within the hour, when the *Princeton* asked the *Birmingham* for a tow the survivors prepared without hesitation to rig their ship for towing. At 1604, however, threatened with another explosion the *Princeton* had to be abandoned, work which occupied half an hour.

Meanwhile, events elsewhere had been moving rapidly. It was discovered that a concentration of the entire Japanese Fleet for attack on the Leyte beaches was in progress, and Task Group 38.3 was required in the north to deal with the threat coming from that direction.

Fires were raging in the *Princeton*, the weather was getting worse, the ships present were in bad shape, and the carrier after dark would have been a flaring beacon for enemy aircraft. At 1650 Rear-Admiral Sherman, acting on instructions from Commander Task Force 38[6] ordered the ship to be sunk ; but it was not until an hour later, at 1750, after six torpedoes had been fired at her singly, and some shelling, that the *Princeton* blew up and sank in 15° 12′ N., 123° 35′ E.[7] The rescue ships, *Birmingham*, *Morrison*, *Irwin* and

[1] M.0510/45, *Action Report, 24th/27th October, 1944, West Pacific, U.S.S. " Birmingham "* p. 2.

[2] The *Reno* had no tow line and set about making one (M.012611/44, *Report of Sinking of U.S.S. " Princeton " on 24.10.1944* [excerpts from *Reno's* Action Report], p. 3). Cincpac, *Report*, p. 111 says however, that *Birmingham* was asked at this juncture to undertake to tow and replied in the affirmative.

[3] It was a false alarm.

[4] M.013239/44, *Battle of the Philippines, 24th October, 1944. U.S.S. " Princeton's " Action Report, including loss of U.S.S. " Princeton "*.

[5] Killed 229, missing four, wounded 416, half of them seriously.

[6] Vice-Admiral Marc A. Mitscher.

[7] M.012611/44, *Report of Sinking of U.S.S. " Princeton " on 24th October, 1944*, p. 4.

Gatling, all of them, except the last, damaged to a greater or less degree and crowded with dead and injured, were formed into Task Group 38.3.6, and set course for Ulithi.

The sinking of the *Princeton*[1] cost the enemy about 110 aircraft which were shot down around Task Group 38.3,[2] and in addition 40 Japanese aircraft were shot down by the Americans before the enemy attack.

[1] Casualties of the *Princeton's* crew were: known killed, one officer and six men; missing, nine officers and 92 men; wounded, about 190 officers and men.

[2] Admiral King's Second Report, p. 21, but see footnote 3, p. 31.

CHAPTER IV

AIR ATTACKS ON THE ENEMY CENTRE FORCE, 24th OCTOBER

(See Plan 1 and Appendix M II)

19. Contact with the Japanese Centre Force, 0810 24th October

Almost simultaneously with the enemy air attack which resulted in the loss of the *Princeton*, search aircraft from Task Group 38.2 at 0810 on 24th sighted the enemy main body (Centre Force) which had traversed Mindoro Strait in the dark and was now in the Tablas Strait east of Mindoro Island, in position 12° 14′ N., 121° 32′ E., proceeding at 18 knots on a course 015° which would eventually take them to San Bernardino Strait. The force was in two groups of almost similar composition. The first was reported as two battleships, three or four heavy or light cruisers and six destroyers; the second as two battleships, three or four heavy or light cruisers and seven destroyers.[1] a.m. 24th Oct.

Admiral Halsey intercepted the enemy report and after repeating it to Vice-Admiral Mitscher (Commander Task Force 38) and the commanders of Task Groups 38.3 (Rear-Admiral Sherman) and 38.4 (Rear-Admiral Davison), ordered them at 0827, to concentrate off San Bernardino Strait on Task Group 38.2 (Rear-Admiral Bogan), in which his own flagship, the *New Jersey*, was operating and to send off strikes.[2] However, by the time the order was received[3] the *Princeton* had been damaged and by Vice-Admiral Mitscher's orders Task Group 38.3 remained with her until the evening when orders came to sink the ship. The remaining Task Group, 38.1, Vice-Admiral McCain's group, had been *en route* to Ulithi since 22nd and was in approximately 11° 45′ N., 135° 40′ E. A strike at Yap was planned for the morning of 24th, but was cancelled when at 0846 Admiral Halsey ordered the group to reverse course[4] and proceed at best speed towards position in 15° N. 130° E. and launch a search to the north and north-west at dawn on 25th. A further message instructed the Task Group to fuel at daylight and report completion by urgent despatch.

20. The Japanese Southern Force Discovered, 0905 24th October

Shortly before the first air strikes reached the enemy main body, other smaller detachments of the Japanese Fleet were discovered to the southward, in the Sulu Sea. At 0805 on 24th search-strike aircraft from the *Franklin*, one of the fast carriers of Rear-Admiral Davison's Task Group 38.4 reported sighting and attacking three destroyers west of Panay Island, and at 0940 the *Franklin* launched a special strike of 11 fighters and 11 bombers to continue the attack and to search for other targets. Only two of the enemy destroyers were found, one of which was strafed, reported hit by rockets and left burning

[1] For the actual strength of the force, *see* Appendix F.

[2] Admiral Halsey's Despatch (*Secret Intelligence Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–12).

[3] Vice-Admiral Lee (*Washington*, C.T.F. 34) states that the order to concentrate was received at 1010 (M.03212/45, p. 5). The following entry occurs in the report of *Santa Fe* (cruiser in T.G. 38.3): "1045 intercepted orders from Com. Third Fleet, ordering T.G. 38.3 to proceed southward and join T.G. 38.2." (M.01553/45, p. 12.) The discrepancy has little importance.

[4] V.A. McCain's despatch (M.0410/45, p. 21). But his flag captain (Capt. O. A. Webber, U.S.S. *Wasp*) in his Report (M.0715/45, p. 31) says the order to reverse course was received about 1045, though his track chart (which is on a very small scale) shows him reversing course after steaming about 125 miles at 16 knots from 0000/23rd (*i.e.*, at about 0800).

24th Oct. aft, the other slightly damaged. At 0905 aircraft from the *Enterprise*, another of Rear-Admiral Davison's fast carrier group intercepted and attacked a force of two battleships, one heavy cruiser, and four destroyers in the Sulu Sea in 08° 55′ N., 121° 50′ E., south-west of Negros Island.[1] This was Vice-Admiral Nishimura's command ("C" Force), consisting of the old battleships *Fuso* and *Yamashiro*, the heavy cruiser *Mogami*, and the 4th Destroyer Division (four destroyers).[2] The search team reported, apparently somewhat over-optimistically, two bomb hits on each battleship, rocket hits on the cruiser and two of the destroyers, and heavy strafing of the other two destroyers.[3] Admiral Halsey assumed that the Seventh Fleet could take care of this small southern force, and adhered to his decision that Task Group 38.4 should concentrate as previously ordered and transfer its attack from this newly-discovered force to the Japanese main body.

21. Air Attacks on the Centre Force, 24th October, Sinking of the "Musashi"

Meanwhile Admiral Halsey's carrier aircraft had found and struck the Japanese Centre Force in the Sibuyan Sea, east of Mindoro, and continued throughout the day to batter it as it steered towards the San Bernardino Strait, making a total of 350 sorties in six waves between 0830 and 1730. Cloud cover at 5,000 to 6,000 feet hampered the aircraft somewhat, but there was no air opposition, though A.A. fire was intense. Task Group 38.2 made a total of 146 sorties, dropped 23 tons of bombs and 23 torpedoes, reporting the battleship *Yamato* damaged by three torpedo hits; another battleship of that class (possibly the same one) damaged by a torpedo and two bombs; a *Nagato* battleship hit by torpedo and one bomb; a *Kongo* battleship hit by two torpedoes and six bombs; a *Mogami* class heavy cruiser possibly sunk by a torpedo hit, and a *Nachi* and a *Tone* class heavy cruiser each hit by one torpedo. Task Group 38.4 reported a battleship, believed to be the *Musashi*, hit by torpedo, on fire, down by the bow, and probably sunk; the battleship *Yamato* hit by one to three torpedoes and four bombs; a *Kongo* battleship hit by a bomb; one cruiser damaged; one light cruiser sunk; one destroyer sunk, one probably sunk, and four damaged.[4]

The claims of the aircraft crews of Rear-Admiral Sherman's Task Group 38.3, namely one battleship badly hit and two others damaged, and four heavy and two light cruisers damaged, were comparatively modest. The early morning air attack which necessitated his sending up every fighter he had, delayed his first strike until about 1100, by which time sufficient fighters had been landed and re-serviced to send off a properly escorted attack. Pilots of

[1] Report of Commander Third Fleet, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–12. The photographs on pp. 78–11c, d, e, give the time of attack [by *Enterprise* Air Group 20] as 0950: this may be a misprint.

[2] *See* Appendix F.

[3] Admiral Halsey's Despatch (*Secret Intelligence Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–12). But this does not agree with the report received by Vice-Admiral Kinkaid, for which *see* Section 27. *Cincpac Report*, p. 62, gives "at least three 500-pound bomb hits, plus several rocket hits on each of the two battleships. *Mogami* class heavy cruiser and the four destroyers were strafed and hit by rockets." The only surviving Japanese commanding officer (Cdr. Nishino, of the destroyer *Shigure*) states that the *Fuso* received one bomb hit which destroyed her aircraft, and the *Shigure* had one gun damaged by a bomb hit, though her speed and navigability were not affected.

[4] These details are taken from Admiral Halsey's Despatch (*Secret Intelligence Bulletin No. 22*, p. 78–13) and represent, with the reports of T.G. 38.3, the information of enemy damage available to him.

the reinforced search aircraft landing after the strike was launched[1] reported 24th Oct. considerable targets in the Manila area, including two light cruisers, one damaged heavy cruiser[2] several destroyers and many merchant ships. Apart, however, from the fact that the continued presence of enemy aircraft and insufficiency of fighters precluded sending strikes to Manila he considered the Japanese force in the Sibuyan Sea was the main objective, and left the ships at Manila unmolested.

The losses of American aircraft during their attacks on the Japanese Second Fleet were very light. Rear-Admiral Sherman's Task Group, 38.3, lost during the day's operations, including the heavy air attacks made on it, only ten aircraft, five pilots and four aircrewmen. On the other hand, 120 Japanese aircraft were shot down whilst attacking the formation[3] and a further 47 were brought down near Luzon.

22. Lack of Air Support for the Japanese Second Fleet

But in spite of the enthusiastic reports of the American airmen, Vice-Admiral Kurita's force had suffered no crippling loss or damage. Since it was important in the existing situation to slow down the enemy battleships and damage their fire control gear[4] the American aircraft directed their attacks against the two battle squadrons which were in the centre of a circular formation. The performance of the American bombs and torpedoes against the Japanese battleships was disappointing.[5] Mixed depth settings of 10 ft. and 20 ft. were used, though the *Enterprise* reports eight torpedoes dropped against a *Yamato* class battleship, set for 12 ft. The great new battleship *Musashi* was hit by torpedoes and bombs[6] and sank later in the day, south of Mindoro Island whilst trying to reach Koron Bay; and the heavy cruiser *Myoko* received damage to two shafts from a torpedo hit at 1135 and returned to Singapore unescorted.[7] With the possible exception of the *Yahagi* no other cruisers were damaged, and although all the other battleships received one or two hits all of them were able to continue to fight.[8] The only destroyer reported damaged was the *Kiyoshimo*.

[1] *See* Section 15.

[2] Some of these were no doubt ships which had been damaged previous to the Third Fleet carrier strikes of 24th October, c.f. Section 12.

[3] Rear-Admiral Sherman's Report (M.0237/45, p. 7). No reports are forthcoming from T.G.s 38.2. and 38.4. *Lexington*, however (M.01571/45, p. 23), gives the following figures: Some 100–125 aircraft shot down by C.A.P. and 30–40 by U.S. search aircraft, sum total 150–160. Admiral King's Second Report says 110 were shot down.

[4] *Secret Information Bulletin No. 22*, p. 78–107.

[5] *Op. Cit.*, p. 78–123.

[6] N.I.D. 10079/45 *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. 149) Nav. No. 35*, p. 149–3, states that she was hit by 18 torpedoes and 40 bombs. N.I.D. 10086/45, *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. B.S. 170) Nav. No. 41*, p. 170–2, states that she was hit by four torpedoes, only one of which exploded, and by 40 bombs. Capt. Kato, her Executive Officer stated in interrogation that she was hit in all by about 30 bombs and 26 torpedoes before capsizing. About 1,100 men were lost. The action reports (Appendix M.11) mention five torpedo hits in the first four attacks, and further damage in the fifth attack.

[7] The joint U.S. Army-Navy assessment committee found that the *Chokai* was also sunk, but this is incorrect.

[8] Op. cit. pp. 47–8, 9. Vice-Admiral Kurita's Staff Officer (Operations) (Comdr. Otano) gave the following damage to the remaining battleships:—*Yamato*—two large bomb hits and two near misses, the latter making a large hole in the bow. *Nagato, Kongo, Haruna*—one bomb hit each, but with the exception of the *Nagato* he was uncertain of the date when these battleships were hit. (N.I.D. 10086/45, p. 170–2.)

24th Oct. The Executive Officer of the *Musashi* gave the following account of the sinking of the ship :—

> " In the first attack, about 1030, the *Musashi* was hit on the starboard side by three torpedoes. The second attack about 15–20 minutes later. We received five torpedo hits on the port side from this attack. From about 1300 we gradually fell astern of the main disposition and by 1430 were well separated from the other ships. We were accompanied only by the *Tone*. About 1530 the heaviest attack of the day was made against this ship. The total number of hits received was about 30 bombs and 26 torpedoes. We attempted to beach the *Musashi* on the north coast of Sibuyan Island, but about 1930 it capsized to port and sank. It sank because two torpedo attacks hit in the same place on the port side abreast of No. 4 engine room. Pumping was hindered due to the cumulative bomb damage above, so it was impossible to check the flooding. About 50 per cent. of the 2,200 men on board were lost."[1]

Vice-Admiral Kurita received intelligence that American carrier aircraft had been over Manila early that morning, and his own radar gave him warning of attack at about 50 to 60 miles distance. He also learnt through a short message from Vice-Admiral Nishimura that his part of the operation was not going well, and he assumed that the air attack (by the *Enterprise*) at 0905 had caused serious damage. However, he made no alteration in the plan of operations.

The Centre Force sustained the great day-long attacks of Admiral Halsey's fast carrier aircraft without air cover, nor had Vice-Admiral Nishimura's detachment any air protection when attacked from the *Enterprise* that morning. The original plan had made provision for the Second Fleet to be accompanied by Carrier Division 3, consisting of the light carriers *Zuiho*, *Chitose* and *Chiyoda*, with the addition of the carrier *Zuikaku*. These ships were to join Vice-Admiral Kurita at Lingga, but the rapidity with which the Allies struck at the Philippines defeated this intention, for the training of fresh carrier aircraft after the losses in the June engagement off the Marianas was still incomplete.[2]

Admiral Toyoda had given orders for the navy land-based fleets to give cover to Vice-Admiral Kurita, and the latter was empowered to apply direct to the navy air chiefs. On account, however, of shortage of aircraft there were few to spare from the attacks on the American fast carriers ; and this factor, together with bad weather and the poor state of training of the Japanese, was apparently the reason why Vice-Admiral Kurita's repeated requests for air cover were ignored.[3] Army air cover had been arranged for him, and he could apply direct to Field Marshal Terauchi, Commander-in-Chief, Southern Army,

[1] *Interrogation Nav. No. 83, U.S.S. B.S. No. 407* (Rear-Admiral Akira Soji).

[2] N.I.D. 10056/45, *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. B.S. No. 47) Nav. No. 9*, p. 47–8.

[3] *Interrogation of Vice-Admiral Fukudome, Nav. No. 115, U.S.S. B.S. No. 503.* Captain Inoguchi, Chief of Staff of First Air Fleet, also stated that bad weather prevented air cover being given to the Second Fleet (*Interrogation Nav. No. 12, U.S.S. B.S. No. 62*). Commander Yamaguchi, Operations Officer on the Staff of the Combined Base Air Force (Philippines) stated that the standard protection for a fleet, viz. 10 aircraft, was ordered for the Second Fleet from a point 200 miles from Luzon until it arrived off Leyte, but this C.A.P. was ineffective against the U.S. aircraft, and the time occupied in returning to Luzon to fuel left the Second Fleet without protection for long periods (*Interrogation Nav. No. 44, U.S.S. B.S., No. 193*). Vice-Admiral Kurita would seem to have been unaware that the C.-in-C. Southwest Area Fleet, Vice-Admiral Matsuda, had been placed in command of the Navy Air Fleets in the Philippines, for he states that he addressed his requests for air cover to Vice-Admiral Onishi.

who disposed of the Fourth Air Army, but he apparently knew nothing about this.[1]

23. The Fast Carriers Concentrate, p.m., 24th October

Evening 24th Oct. In face of the continued strikes the Japanese Centre Force held on its course " with a determination which commanded respect,"[2] although at one time in the afternoon reported to be " milling around."[3] At 1749 the *Enterprise* reported that the force consisted of about 25 ships in two groups, position 12° 50′ N., 122° 35′ E. (in the middle of the Sibuyan Sea), heading westward when last seen at 1600.

Vice-Admiral Kurita did, in fact, retire temporarily to the westward about 1600, to avoid air attack. He informed Admiral Toyoda and received in reply an order to continue the advance,[4] though apparently he had already resumed his course for San Bernardino Strait before the order reached him, the air attacks having ceased.[5]

Sunset was at 1805. Between 1715 and 2400 on 24th the night carrier *Independence*, in Admiral Halsey's own Task Group 38.2, spent 30 hours' flying time in following the Japanese main body eastward. During these hours Vice-Admiral Kurita passed through the San Bernardino Strait, but the information apparently failed to get through. Communication troubles were experienced by the tracking aircraft, for although there was no indication of deliberate interference these aircraft and the Japanese powerful nearby land stations appear to have shared the same frequency.[6] Sufficient enemy reports were received, however, to show that the main body of the Japanese fleet was continuing to steer for San Bernardino Strait. At 2030 and 2145 on 24th it was sighted by an *Independence* aircraft north of Masbate Island on various courses and trailing much oil.[7] Task Group 38.4 had joined Task Group 38.2 at 1630

[1] Vice-Admiral Kurita in his interrogation said : " No request was made of the Army ; I do not know whether there were any army planes there or not. When called upon for planes, the Navy would send planes if they had them ; if not, the Navy would request them locally from the Army. That was my opinion." (N.I.D. 10056/45, p. 47–8.) Captain Ohmae, Chief of Staff to Vice-Admiral Ozawa, stated in his interrogation that the Navy had no satisfactory liaison with Army aircraft in the Philippines and could not call on them for assistance. The reasons he gave for poor co-operation were that on the technical side, Army pilots could not navigate ; the Army insisted upon being a defensive machine and would not fight offensively ; there was a clash of personalities below the higher levels ; and Army maintenance was very poor (N.I.D. 10080/45, p. 150–9). Vice-Admiral Kurita's Chief of Staff, Rear-Admiral Koyanagi, stated that it was very difficult to obtain co-operation between the fleet and land-based aircraft (N.I.D. 10079/45, p. 149–8). On the other hand Vice-Admiral Fukudome, who commanded the shore-based Navy Air Fleets in the Philippines, did not think there was any particular friction between the Army and Navy Air Forces. (*Interrogation Navy No. 115, U.S.S. B.S., No. 103.*)

[2] Admiral Halsey's Despatch.

[3] *C.T.F. 34, Report*, M.03212/45, p. 2.

[4] Appendix M.II.

[5] His Staff Officer, Operations (Commander Otano) stated that it was hoped the message might bring out land-based aircraft to protect him, and that the same message as was sent to Admiral Toyoda was also sent to Admirals Fukudome and Onishi at Manila. (N.I.D. 10086/45, p. 170–4.)

[6] *Independence*, Report (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–80/81). It is clear however from Admiral Halsey's Despatch that he fully expected the Japanese Centre Force to pass through the Strait.

[7] Admiral Halsey's Despatch (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–14).

in 13° 36′ N., 126° 01′ E., and Admiral Halsey directed Rear-Admiral Davison, who flew his flag in U.S.S. *Franklin*, to assume tactical command of the two Task Groups. Vice-Admiral Sherman, with Task Group 38.3, who had been standing by the *Princeton* all day, did not join until about 2330/24th. It was Admiral Halsey's intention, in the event of the enemy breaking out of the San Bernardino Strait, to form a Task Force (T.F. 34) to engage him.[1]

[1] Report of C.T.F. 34 (M.03212/45, p. 5).

CHAPTER V

THE THIRD FLEET GOES NORTH

24. Discovery of the Japanese Northern Force, 1540, 24th October

Meanwhile, the discovery of the Japanese Carrier Force in the north had created a new situation. The air attacks on Task Group 38.3, in which the *Princeton* was sunk, continued during the forenoon of the 24th. The attacking enemy aircraft came from two directions, from Luzon and from a sector roughly between north and north-east. A preponderance of carrier-based types indicated that a Japanese carrier force might be at hand in that direction.[1] a.m. 24th Oct.

The surmise was, in fact, correct. Vice-Admiral Ozawa had sailed from the Inland Sea with the carrier force on 20th October, leaving Okishima in the Bungo Suido at 1700. American submarines were detected shortly afterwards, both visually by aircraft and by radar,[2] and the force proceeded eastward until 2100 on 20th when it turned south to meet its supply ships from Amami O Shima. Refuelling was carried out during the afternoon of 22nd in about 24½° N., 135° E., and at 2000 that day the Vice-Admiral put a fairly long message on the air, and subsequently made several contacts with U.S. submarines. Search aircraft were sent out from 0700 on 21st onwards. At daybreak on 24th the force was in position 19° N., 126° 40′ E.; and at 0820 Japanese shore-based aircraft reported the enemy (Rear-Admiral Sherman's Task Group 38.3) bearing 60° distance 90 miles from Manila. It was not until 1115, however, that Vice-Admiral Ozawa's aircraft sighted Rear-Admiral Sherman's group, bearing 120° distance 180 miles; the observer was unable to state whether it included any carriers.

Vice-Admiral Ozawa decided to attack, and at 1145 he sent off 40 fighters, 28 bombers, two reconnaissance and six torpedo aircraft, total 76; Rear-Admiral Sherman's task group was then bearing 210°, distance 150 to 160 miles. Visibility at the target was 20 miles, with fierce squalls to the east and south. The Japanese aircraft were instructed to land at Nichols Field, Luzon or other shore bases if the weather should render return to the carriers too hazardous. Apparently about 40 aircraft reached the target, and 30 to 40 reached Luzon. Only three returned to their ships, and none of them were able to state what results had been obtained. Poor communications prevented any report of the result of the strikes from reaching the Northern Force from the aircraft which landed on Luzon.

"At this time," writes Admiral Halsey,[3] "it was evident that the Japanese navy was making a major effort, whether for direct attacks or transporting troops, or both, was not apparent. If this was to be an all-out attack by the Japanese fleet, there was one piece missing in the puzzle—the carriers. They were believed to have been in Japan; and there had been sightings which indicated that replenishment measures might have been taken for some important move from Japanese waters. Although our submarines stationed in Japanese waters had not reported a carrier force, it was felt that they were sure to be employed in some manner in any operation as great as that revealed on the morning of the 24th."

[1] *Report of C.T.G. 38.3* (M.0237/45, p. 5).

[2] *See* Appendix M.V. Captain T. Ohmae, Chief of Staff to Vice-Admiral Ozawa, stated that the force learnt of the location of one of the submarines from the American telephone (*Interrogation No. U.S.S. B.S. No. 150 Nav. No. 36*, N.I.D. 1008/45).

[3] Despatch, para. 9 (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–12).

a.m. 24th Oct. At 1045 on 24th Admiral Halsey had ordered Rear-Admiral Sherman to keep the area to the north under observation.[1] At 1155 Rear-Admiral Sherman, who had been ordered not to leave the neighbourhood of the stricken *Princeton* by Vice-Admiral Marc A. Mitscher (C.T.F. 38) was instructed by the latter to launch a search consisting of two fighters and one bomber aircraft in each sector between the bearings 350° and 040.[2] However, more than two hours were to elapse before the search got off. Twice the fighters made ready by the *Essex* had to be scrambled to beat off fresh enemy air attacks, and 14 fighter aircraft assembled by the *Lexington* for the search had to be similarly employed. At length, as he had no fighters left Rear-Admiral Sherman, who strongly suspected the presence of enemy carriers to the north-east obtained permission from Vice-Admiral Mitscher to send bomber search aircraft on "single plane search" without accompanying fighters. At 1405, a few minutes after what was to prove the final enemy air attack of the day on the group, these aircraft were launched from the *Lexington*, and at 1640 they reported the missing Japanese carriers (the Northern Force) 190 miles to the north-north eastward.

Afternoon 24th Oct.

Vice-Admiral Ozawa had been vainly awaiting information from his aircraft of the result of their strikes; but all contact with his reconnaissance aircraft was lost. Meanwhile, the American air attacks on Vice-Admiral Kurita continued without cessation, and it was apparent that the Northern Force was not succeeding in its task of drawing the enemy northward. It seems that up till now Vice-Admiral Ozawa had received reports of no more than the northernmost (Rear-Admiral Sherman's) Task Group, 38.3, in which his information was that two carriers had been damaged, despite the fact that in the course of this day, 24th October, each of the three task groups, 38.2, 38.3 and 38.4 of Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet was reconnoitred by Japanese aircraft.[3] Ozawa determined to send south Rear-Admiral Matsuda, commander of his advance guard, consisting of the 4th Carrier Squadron (*Hyuga, Ise*), the 61st Destroyer Division (less the *Suzutsuki*) and 41st Destroyer Division (*Shimotsuki*), to make contact with Rear-Admiral Sherman and try to draw him northward, and, if opportunity offered, to attack. He himself with the remainder of his force would proceed westward until about 1600, in the hope of taking on his aircraft, after which he would resume his south-easterly course.

Rear-Admiral Matsuda's force made no attack and was eventually recalled, rejoining about sunrise on 25th. To his chagrin, Vice-Admiral Ozawa then learnt that about 1900–2100 on 24th the detached force sighted in the distance what it is now thought may have been an electrical storm, though Matsuda at the time considered it to be the American task force, under attack with torpedoes by land-based Japanese aircraft, for his force had radar contact at the time with aircraft though the distance, 50 kilometres (27 nautical miles), was too great for radar contact to be made with ships.[4] On account of the danger of causing confusion if he approached, Rear-Admiral Matsuda sheered off; and when the attack was over the American task force could not again

[1] U.S.S. *Santa Fe, Action Report* (M.01553/45, p. 12).

[2] Report of C.T.G. 38.3 (M.0237/45, p. 5). It is not clear whether the directive for the search came from C.T.F. 38 or from Admiral Halsey. The latter, in his Despatch, in para. 9 commencing "At this time" (a.m./24th) merely says: "a search to the north by our carrier planes was ordered." Admiral King *Second Report*, p. 22 says that Admiral Halsey ordered the search to be made.

[3] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 119. Vice-Admiral Fukudome, Commander Combined Air Fleet at Manila, stated that Vice-Admiral Ozawa's force was outside the area of his command and he was consequently unable to give him any information. (*Interrogation U.S.S. B.S., Fo. 503, Nav. No. 115*).

[4] *Interrogation Nav. No. 69, U.S.S. B.S., No. 345.*

be found. Due to the need for maintaining radio silence the sighting of the supposed fast carriers was not reported back to Vice-Admiral Ozawa at the time. Evening 24th Oct.

At 2010 on 24th the latter received Vice-Admiral Kurita's report that the Centre Force had retired to the westward [at 1600], and unwilling to stand alone, Ozawa turned 10 points and retired in his turn until ordered to advance again by the Commander-in-Chief Combined Fleet at 242110.[1] Accordingly, Ozawa turned once more to a south-easterly course. It seemed to him that the Americans would continue their attacks on the Japanese Second Fleet next day, and it was his duty to offer his fleet as a sacrifice to draw Admiral Halsey north.

Amplifying reports to Admiral Halsey of this Northern Force varied. C.T.F. 38 listed the force as three carriers, three to four heavy cruisers, and six destroyers at latitude 18° 10′ N., 125° 30′ E. course 210°, speed 15, and stated that one of the enemy carriers was of the converted battleship *Ise* class. Later he reported that pilots who had had a good look gave the composition as two *Shokaku* fleet carriers, one light carrier, three light cruisers and three destroyers steering 270° at 15 knots in 18° 25′ N., 125° 28′ E. at 1640, whilst in 18° 10′ N., 125° 30′ E., was another force of four battleships or heavy cruisers, five cruisers, and six destroyers, course 210°, speed 15 knots at 1540. One of the battleships was reported to have a flight deck aft. At 1600 two *Terutsuki* class destroyers were reported in 19° 40′ N., 123° 00′ E., course 240, speed 12 knots.[2] After studying the reports, Admiral Halsey concluded that the Northern Force was disposed in two groups, estimated to contain a total of at least 17 ships and possibly as many as 24.[3] The former figure was correct for its actual strength[4] was four carriers and two battleship carriers, all now practically devoid of aircraft,[5] with screen of three light cruisers and eight destroyers.

25. Admiral Halsey's Appreciation of the Situation[6]

On one point the contact reports of all the three Japanese forces were agreed: the detachment in the Sulu Sea (Southern Force) approaching Surigao Strait, the main body (Centre Force) in the Sibuyan Sea steering for San Bernardino Strait, and the northern carrier force were all proceeding at moderate speed. The inference was that there was a predetermined rendezvous of geographical location and time: a co-ordinated plan was being followed, with 25th October as the earliest date of concerted action.

To what extent Admiral Halsey credited the wildly exaggerated aircraft reports of damage to the Japanese Centre Force in the day-long attacks of the 24th[7] is not known, but it is clear from his own words that, as events proved,

[1] Appendix M.V. Combined Fleet S.M.S. 241959.

[2] Probably engaged in escorting reinforcements for Leyte.

[3] Admiral Halsey's Despatch, para. 10. None of these reports agrees with those given by Rear-Admiral Sherman (M.0237/45, p. 6) which he says he passed on to C.T.F. 38 and Com. Third Fleet. Only one of them agrees with *Lexington's* report (M.01571/45, p. 6). Admiral Halsey's times are Item (nine hours fast on G.M.T.). Times in M.0237/45 and M.01571/45 are not specified but appear to be Item.

[4] *See* Appendix F.

[5] At 250000 there were on board: 19 fighters, of which 14 could be used only for "covering operations" (? C.A.P. intended), five fighter-bombers, four torpedo aircraft and one bomber.

[6] Despatch, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22.*

[7] *See* Chapter IV.

Evening 24th Oct.

he did not discount them sufficiently. He concluded that they "indicated, beyond a doubt, that the Centre Force had been badly mauled with all of its battleships and most of its heavy cruisers tremendously reduced in fighting power and life."[1] He considered that the force was adhering blindly to a plan, and though he recognized that it might "plod" through San Bernardino Strait and attack the shipping off the Leyte beaches he was convinced that it was so heavily damaged that it could not win a decision. It was from the newly discovered Northern Force that the greater threat came, for the Commander Third Fleet had, of course, no inkling that its teeth had been drawn and that it was both powerless for attack and almost defenceless in face of his overwhelming air and gun power. By comparing the number and type of battleships and heavy cruisers reported in the Southern and Centre Forces with the total of the Japanese Navy believed operational, and checking them against the reports of the Northern Force, it would have appeared probable that the latter had few, if any, heavy cruisers, and no battleship strength other than the *Ise* and *Hyuga*, both of which, however, mounted eight 14-in. guns and would have been tough opponents for anything except battleships if brought to gun range.[2]

It was clear to Admiral Halsey that attack was essential if the enemy's plan was to be disrupted and the initiative maintained. Moreover, the attack must come swiftly, before the Japanese carriers could once more fly on their aircraft, which after their strikes on the Third Fleet, were no doubt being re-armed and re-fuelled on the airfields of the Philippines, tactics which the enemy had employed four months earlier, at the Battle of the Marianas.

In arriving at this decision the Commander of the Third Fleet considered three alternatives :—

(*a*) To divide his forces, leaving Task Force 34[3] to block San Bernardino Strait, whilst the carriers, with light screens, attacked the Northern Force.

(*b*) To keep his fleet concentrated off San Bernardino Strait.

(*c*) To strike the Northern Force with his entire concentrated striking strength.

Any division of his fleet he rejected as unsound and likely to result in damage to no purpose.

The second alternative was also rejected since it would permit the Northern Force to function unmolested and because the destruction of Japanese carriers would facilitate subsequent operations.

Admiral Halsey, therefore, chose the third alternative. It was strategically sound in that it maintained the integrity of the Third Fleet and afforded the best possibility of surprise and destruction of the enemy carrier force, potentially the most dangerous of the three.[4] Even though the rump of the Japanese Centre Force might emerge from the San Bernardino Strait and inflict some damage, the Commander of the Third Fleet calculated that he could return in

[1] Despatch, para. 13.

[2] This sentence does not occur in Admiral Halsey's appreciation, but is based on Cincpac, *Report*, pp. 69, 118 which assumes that Commander Third Fleet would have taken it into account.

[3] *See* Appendix B. This Task Force had not yet been formed.

[4] M.09953/45, *C.T.G. 38.4, Operations in support of occupation of Leyte—22nd/31st October, 1944 (1st and 2nd Endorsements)*, p. 48.

time to reverse any advantage gained by the enemy. Taking a long view, swift attack on the enemy carriers would contribute most to the Philippines campaign, even if a temporarily hazardous situation existed at Leyte.

That Admiral Halsey was not altogether easy in his mind is clear. Between the Japanese Centre Force and the mass of defenceless shipping off the Leyte landings there stood two forces. The first consisted of 18 escort carriers, mounting one 5-in. gun apiece, which had been allocated for the operation to Vice-Admiral Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet. The second, Rear-Admiral Oldendorf's Task Group 77.2, comprising the battleship and cruiser strength of the Seventh Fleet was, on paper, a respectable force, and Admiral Halsey had already cast them for the role of "taking care" of the Japanese Southern Force. There remained only the escort carriers. The success of the Philippines campaign required that these little ships should hold the pass until the Third Fleet, having dealt with the Japanese carrier force, could return to rescue them. "It was a hard decision to make," writes Admiral Halsey.

26. Task Force 38 Concentrates and goes North, 2330 24th October

Night 24th/25th Oct.

After the discovery of the Japanese Northern Force Vice-Admiral Mitscher decided quickly to attack with his fast carriers. Within the hour, at 1723, he informed his Task Force Commanders that he intended to proceed north-eastward during the night, for it was too late to send off a strike that afternoon against Vice-Admiral Ozawa's force, since the aircraft were just returning from the strikes in the Sibuyan Sea. However, if the north-easterly course was maintained during the night the Japanese carriers could not get away. But orders now came through from Admiral Halsey for Task Groups 38.3 and 38.4 to concentrate towards Task Group 38.2. The latter had been operating off San Bernardino Strait all day and was now coming north with Task Group 38.4 which had joined it at 1630. In conformity with these orders, Rear-Admiral Sherman, in Task Group 38.3, who was in the northernmost position, reluctantly[1] turned south-eastward about 1900 to rendezvous with the other two groups.

At 2022 on 24th the Commander Third Fleet sent out further orders for Task Groups 38.2, 38.3 and 38.4 to assemble at a point about 150 miles north-east of San Bernardino Strait, for the run north during the night and to be prepared to attack at dawn. Task Force 38.3 joined up about 2330 and Vice-Admiral Mitscher, Commander First Carrier Task Force, assumed tactical command of the disposition, Task Force 38. This was a formidable fleet, organized in three groups, each containing a carrier unit supported by two battleships and a complement of cruisers and destroyers.[2] Course 000° was set until midnight, when the force was to proceed to latitude 16° N. In order to avoid over-running the daylight circle of the Japanese carriers, which would place them between Task Force 38 and Leyte, a speed of 16 knots was ordered.[3] At 0000/25 the force was in 14° 31′ N., 125° 34′ E., course was altered to 045°, and speed maintained at 16 knots to close the enemy last reported at 1755/24 in 18° 10′ N., 125° 30′ E. Enemy aircraft were about during the night, for search aircraft were regularly launched by the Japanese carriers from the 22nd onwards, but none appear to have closed the fleet nearer than 35 miles.

[1] *Report of C.T.G. 38.3* (M.0237/45, p. 7).

[2] *See* Appendix A.

[3] Admiral Halsey's Despatch, para. 19.

The hours were pregnant with history, for the coming day was to seal the fate of an empire. Slowly, Admiral Halsey steamed into the night, preceded by planes probing restlessly for the new antagonist hidden in the northern darkness. Behind him the jaws of the Japanese pincers strained to close on the defenceless shipping off the Leyte landings ; for in that midnight hour when the American Third Fleet completed its concentration and set course for the north Kurita, braving the hidden dangers of reef and mine and driving at 20 knots through San Bernardino Strait was making towards Leyte ; whilst to the south of him Nishimura, his eyes on the same objective, was approaching the Surigao Straits whose waters were to be his winding sheet.

CHAPTER VI

THE BATTLE OF SURIGAO STRAIT, NIGHT, 24th–25th OCTOBER

(See Plans 1–6 inclusive and signals, Appendix K. and M. III and V)

27. Approach of the Japanese Southern Force, 24th October

Meanwhile the reinforced search group of aircraft of the *Enterprise* (Task Group 38.4) which at 0905 on 24th had attacked Vice-Admiral Nishimura's C Force (two battleships, one heavy cruiser and four destroyers) in the Sulu Sea south-west of Negros Island, in 08° 55′ N., 121° 50′ E.[1] had reported to Vice-Admiral Kinkaid that four bomb hits had been made on each of the battleships, and rocket hits on the destroyers.[1a] Actually, only minor damage was caused, however.[1b] The force was variously reported as two battleships, two cruisers and four destroyers, and as two battleships, four light cruisers, two heavy cruisers and six destroyers, close to the position of the 0905 report,[1c] but Vice-Admiral Kinkaid rightly assumed that all three reports referred to a single force.[2] Vice-Admiral Nishimura's force was again reported by aircraft[3] and attacked about an hour later at 1000, in approximately the same position and on the same course, namely, north-east towards the Surigao Strait.[4] Shortly afterwards, however, Rear-Admiral R. E. Davison informed the Commander, Seventh Fleet, that he was taking his Task Group 38.4, north to effect concentration with the remainder of Task Force 38 north-east of San Bernardino Strait, and would henceforth be out of range of the newly located Japanese Southern Force. a.m. 24th Oct.

C Force was reported once more, at 1240 close south-west of Negros Island on a south-easterly course,[5] after which it remained unlocated for more than 12 hours.

Meanwhile, a number of sighting reports of other enemy detachments had come in, for from all parts of the archipelago reinforcements were hurrying to Leyte. At 0102 on 24th a force consisting of two heavy cruisers, one light cruiser and four destroyers was reported south of Negros, heading towards the Mindanao Sea,[6] and at 0931 a light cruiser and a destroyer were reported south-east of Negros Island, entering the Mindanao Sea from the Sulu Sea. Search aircraft from the recently captured airfield on Morotai in the Halmaheras

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[1] *See* Section 20.

[1a] Report of C.T.F. 77, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–11. Cm. Third Fleet in his report (Op. cit., p. 78–12), says the search team reported two bomb hits on each battleship, rocket hits on a heavy cruiser and two destroyers, and heavy strafing of two other destroyers. The photographs (Ibid, p. 78–IIc, d) show the *Fuso* apparently on fire from bomb hit aft.

[1b] *See* Appendix M.III, Signal 241151.

[1c] *U.S.S. " Mississippi ", Battle of Surigao Strait*, Sighting Report Plan, M.0632/45, p. 25.

[2] This seems apparent from his Report.

[3] Presumably also from Task Group 38.4.

[4] The only available Japanese source states that only one air attack was received, namely at 0900.

[5] *U.S.S. " Mississippi ", Battle of Surigao Strait*, M.0632/45, p. 8, and Sighting Reports Plan, p. 25, where the force is shown as three battleships, one heavy cruiser and four destroyers.

[6] M.0632/45, Sighting Reports Plan. This force is not mentioned by C.T.F. 77 in his report.

at 1155 reported a force composed of three heavy cruisers and four destroyers proceeding on a south-easterly course at 10 knots in the Sulu Sea, in 09° 30′ N., 120° 30′ E.[1] This, no doubt, was the Fifth Fleet, the heavy cruisers *Nachi* (flagship of Vice-Admiral Shima), and *Ashigara*, and light cruiser *Abukuma* with four destroyers, coming from Koron to join the Third Fleet.

> "The fragmentary information received rendered it difficult to track particular groups of enemy ships through to their amalgamation with forces either in the Sulu Sea or the Palawan—Mindoro area. No definitive track in the early approach phase could be made of the enemy ships which sortied through Surigao Strait. In fact, pre-battle sightings were inadequate to base an operative estimate of the forces we might encounter,"

wrote Captain H. J. Redfield of the *Mississippi*, the flagship of the battle line.[2] Evaluation of reports was rendered difficult by the frequent omission of essential components, such as course and speed. There were frequent failures to recognise correctly the class and even the type of ship sighted.[3] Important participating ships were not kept informed of the movements of enemy units, and had to rely largely on interceptions[4]; and there was very great delay in the receipt of such reports as were re-broadcast.[5]

28. Seventh Fleet Dispositions, afternoon, 24th October.

(a) Light Forces. (Plan 3)

p.m. 24th Oct.

After the sighting report at 1240 there was no further information of the enemy Southern Force for nearly 12 hours. By the early afternoon of the 24th, however, Vice-Admiral Kinkaid felt certain that the enemy intended to attack the naval forces covering the landing at Leyte and made his dispositions accordingly.[6] The Commander, Third Fleet, Admiral Halsey, was informed of his dispositions, so that he would know how and where the Seventh Fleet was committed.[7]

Of the M.T.B.s of Task Group 70.1, the 39 that were available were stationed, in 13 sections of three boats each, to give complete coverage of all approaches, over an area from 10° 10′ N., down to about 9° 10′ N., including the passage between Dinagat and Mindanao. P.T.s 152, 130, 131 and P.T.s 127, 126, 129 covered the northern and southern halves respectively of a line running from Agio Point, Bohol Island to Sipaka Point, Mindanao (9° 01′ N., 124° 52′ E.). About 30 miles further north, just south of Limasawa Island

[1] C.T.F. 77, Report, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–11. In *U.S.S. "Mississippi", Battle of Surigao Strait*, Sighting Reports Plan (M.0632/45, p. 25), a force consisting of one heavy cruiser, two light cruisers, four destroyers is shown at 231155 in this position. This is thought to be the same force and that 231155 should read 241155.

[2] M.0632/45, p. 8.

[3] "In about 30 per cent. of all sighting reports received aboard ship during the month of October, one, several or all ships sighted were reported as 'unidentified'". (M.0632/45, p. 10.)

[4] "If the *Mississippi* had relied solely on addressed traffic for its intelligence information, the only hint of the converging forces would have been derived from the Seventh Fleet operational Intelligence Summaries which, by nature, include information from one to three days old." (*U.S.S. "Mississippi", Battle of Surigao Strait*, M.0632/45, p. 9.)

[5] "A sample of 60 sighting reports was studied and the median time intervening between the time of sighting and the time the report was received aboard ship was discovered to be over six hours. The range was from 50 minutes to 25 hours." (M.0632/45, p. 10.)

[6] Report of C.T.F. 77, *Naval Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–11.

[7] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 115.

in 9° 52′ N., 125° 04′ E., was a section consisting of P.T.s 151, 146, 190. About ten miles farther up, close to the south-east end of Panaon Island, were two sections, P.T.s 196, 194, 150, and P.T.s 134, 132, 137; while south-east from them, just across the narrows, were three section, P.T.s 192, 191, 195, P.T.s 494, 497, 324, and P.T.s 523, 524, 526, stationed around Bilas Point on the north tip of Mindanao. About 15 to 20 miles still farther north, off Amagusan Point, Leyte, were two sections, P.T.s 320, 330, 331 and P.T.s 328, 323, 329; while south-east from them across the Strait were three sections, P.T.s 490, 491, 493, P.T.s 327, 321, 326 and P.T.s 495, 489 and 492, stationed off the Dinagat shore. p.m. 24th Oct.

These M.T.B.s were not under Rear-Admiral Oldendorf's orders.[1] Their orders were to report the enemy when sighted, and then attack independently. To avoid possibility of attacking Allied ships, those in the upper end of the Strait near the main body had orders to get clear and stay clear if there were any sign of Allied heavy ships moving south into their area, and not to attack any ships moving down the Strait unless positively identified as enemy. The boats were at their station by the early evening.

Destroyer pickets were also stationed in the eastern entrances to the Surigao Strait between Homonhon Island and Dinagat Island, to give early warning of enemy approach.

(b) Battle Line. (Plan 3)

To the Commander Task Group 77.2, Rear-Admiral J. B. Oldendorf, who flew his flag in the heavy cruiser *Louisville*, the Commander, Seventh Fleet made the following signal at 1312:—

> "Consider enemy night surface attack to-night Leyte Gulf via Surigao Strait is imminent. Make all preparations. My despatch orders are now being sent out."[2]

Rear-Admiral Oldendorf's Fire Support and Bombardment Group, Task Group 77.2,[3] consisted of six of the older battleships, *Mississippi*, *Maryland*, *West Virginia*, *Tennessee*, *California* and *Pennsylvania*, three heavy and two light cruisers, and 15 destroyers. His force was now augmented by the Close Covering Group, Task Group 77.3 under Rear-Admiral R. S. Berkey, consisting of the two light cruisers, *Phoenix* (flagship) and *Boise*, a destroyer division (five destroyers), and H.M.A.S. *Shropshire* and *Arunta*. These two latter ships belonged to the Royal Australian Navy Cruiser Squadron under Commodore Collins, R.A.N., which also included H.M.A.S. *Australia* and *Warramunga*. On the morning of the 21st October, however, whilst operating in the support area the *Australia* had been damaged by a suicide dive bomber, the first Allied ship to be damaged by this form of attack which was subsequently to give considerable trouble. The *Australia* suffered a number of casualties, including her Commanding Officer, Captain F. V. de Chazneaux, R.N., who was killed; and the damage had necessitated her withdrawal from the area escorted by the destroyer *Warramunga*.

Rear-Admiral Berkey reported to Commander Task Group 77.2 at 1610, and the two Task Groups were formed into one for action.

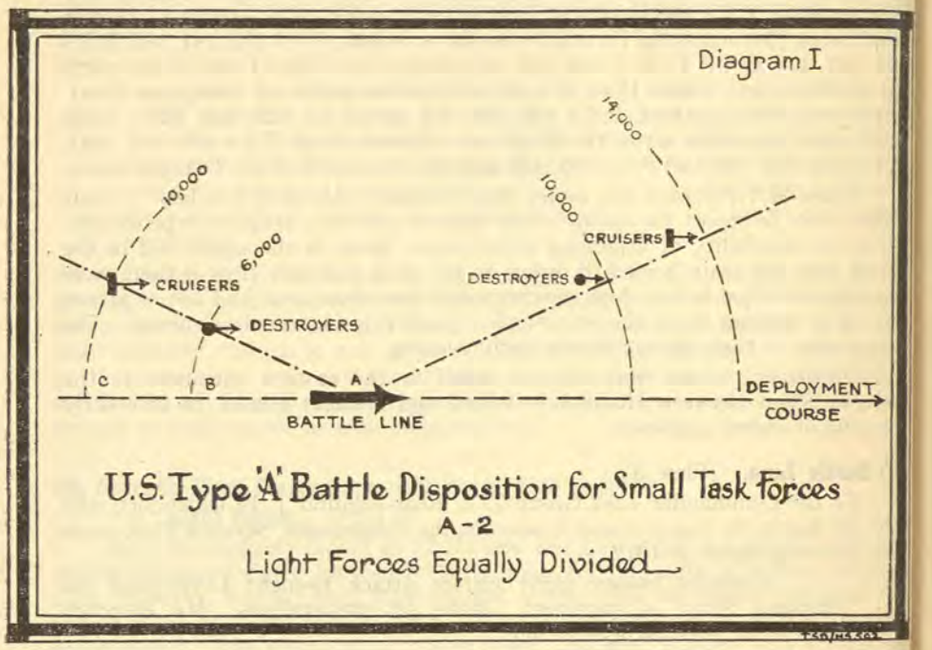
During the afternoon Rear-Admiral Berkey and the Commander Battle Line, Rear-Admiral G. L. Weyler, U.S.S. *Mississippi*, conferred with the O.T.C., Rear-Admiral Oldendorf, on board the *Louisville*, and the details of the battle plan were settled.

[1] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 73; c.f. however, Appendix K, second signal.

[2] M.04530/45, *U.S.S. "Killen," Action Report*, p. 1.

[3] *See* Appendix E.

p.m. 24th Oct. The disposition ordered was " X-ray battle disposition used like A–2 in U.S.F.–10A."



The position of the Battle Line was chosen in the northern part of Surigao Strait, in order to avoid the restricted waters further south. To meet the contingency of the enemy attempting to pass east of Hibuson Island or sending a detachment in that direction, the two most heavily armed battleships, the *West Virginia* and the *Maryland*, which each mounted eight 16-in. guns against 12 14-in. of the other four battleships, were placed at the eastern end of the Battle Line, which from east to west was as follows :—

Battleships—*West Virginia*	Destroyers—*Aulick*
Maryland	*Cony*
Mississippi (F)	*Sigourney*
Tennessee	*Claxton*
California	*Welles*
Pennsylvania	*Thorn*

The initial position of the battleships was in latitude 10° 35′ N., steaming east and west at five knots between longitudes 125° 16′ E. and 125° 27′ E., at which points they reversed course. The destroyers were to be used for screening as desired.

The position was chosen so as to allow some freedom of movement to the Battle Line and yet enable it to train its guns on the enemy whilst the latter was still in the narrower waters of the Strait. Even so, the east to west space was limited, and at a greater speed than five knots the frequent turns necessary would entail a great risk of being on the turn when fire was opened.

Rear-Admiral Berkey's force, Task Group 77.3, was assigned duty as Right Flank Force and took station 240° 8,000 yards from the Battle Line at

2000 in approximate position 10° 30′ N., 125° 20′ E., north-east of Kabugan Grande Island, and patrolled at slow speed on an east-west line on the western side of Surigao Strait. Owing to the crowded conditions on the right flank when the Battle Line was in its extreme westerly (right) position, the Commander Right Flank was authorised to station his destroyers about 8,000 yards to the south and down channel from his westernmost position, on a north-south line between Kabugan Grande Island and Bugho Point (*see* Plan 5). p.m. 24th Oct.

The cruisers and the remainder of the destroyers of Task Group 77.2, namely the heavy cruisers in the following order, *Louisville*, *Portland* and *Minneapolis*, the light cruisers *Denver* and *Columbia*, and nine destroyers of Destroyer Squadron 56 took station in column on the Battle Line as Left Flank Force, north-west of Hibuson Island. The left flank was made stronger than the right, on account of the possible danger from the eastern end of Surigao Strait as well as from the southern end.

The strong current, the slow speed occasioned by the confined area, and other factors rendered it difficult for all the ships to maintain these dispositions.

The Commander Task Group 77.2 (Rear-Admiral Oldendorf) was in the cruiser *Louisville*, in the Left Flank Force.

The 18 escort carriers of Task Group 77.4 with their escorts, under Rear-Admiral T. L. Sprague, were disposed about 50 miles to the eastward of Homonhon Island (east of Samar Island) in three Task Units within mutually supporting distance and from north to south as follows : 77.4.3, 77.4.1, 77.4.2.[1]

Apart from the difficulties inherent in a night action—the difficulty of keeping track of one's own destroyers after releasing them to fulfil their proper function of attacking the enemy with torpedoes, and the danger, in narrow waters, of possible minefields and lurking enemy destroyers—Rear-Admiral Oldendorf's tactics were handicapped by lack of intelligence of the enemy and shortage of ammunition and to some extent, his freedom of action was hampered by the possibility that he might have to defend Leyte Gulf against an attack from seaward as well as holding Surigao Strait.[2]

It was not possible to determine in advance whether the enemy would include his heavy cruisers in his battle line. Between the last sighting report of the Southern Force at 1240 and the next report at 2310, when the Sulu Sea group were definitely approaching the Surigao Strait nearly 12 hours had elapsed, and during the interval it would have been possible for the Sulu Sea forces to effect a junction with the force in the Sibuyan Sea and carry out a complete re-organisation of forces.[3] This lack of continuous reconnaissance was the first factor affecting the tactical situation, and it was particularly disquieting to the Americans not to know the size of the force they might be expected to encounter.

Rear-Admiral Oldendorf's directive to the Battle Line stated that an enemy striking force of at least two battleships, four heavy cruisers, four light cruisers and ten destroyers might attack after 1900.[4] This estimate of the enemy's strength was not far out for the two groups of the Southern Force together actually comprised the two old battleships *Fuso* and *Yamashiro*, the heavy cruisers *Nachi*, *Mogami* and *Ashigara*, the light cruiser *Abukuma*, and eight

[1] Report of C.T.F. 77, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–11. This does not correspond with the Composite Plot of the tracks of the three task units given on p. 78–28 of the *Bulletin*, where T.U. 77.4.1 is shown in approximate position 09° N., 127° 25′ E. at 0000/25, 115 miles south of T.U. 77.4.2.

[2] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 80

[3] *U.S. " Mississippi ", Battle of Surigao Strait, 25th October, 1944*, M.0632/45, p. 8.

[4] C.T.G. 77.2 Comments, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–15.

p.m. 24th Oct. destroyers. The leading group (" C " Force) entered the Strait some 20 to 30 miles ahead of the group in rear (Fifth Fleet).[1]

The second factor influencing the tactics of the Battle Line was the battleships' ammunition outfits. The outfit required for the dual roles of bombarding and battle called for compromise. The equipment of Rear-Admiral Oldendorf's ships was on the scale usual for Bombardment and Fire Support Groups. The employment of the older battleships on bombardment duties had gradually led to their outfits of armour-piercing projectiles and service charges being reduced to a point which proved extremely embarrassing in the present situation.[2] For their main armaments the battleships were carrying no more than 20 to 30 rounds per gun of A.P., of which a percentage, varying for the different ships, had already been expended in bombardments; whilst of their 5-in. outfits about 40 per cent. remained. The destroyers had expended all but about one-fifth of their 5-in. outfits. No replenishment had been effected since the landing on 20th October. Two ammunition ships had been sent into Leyte Gulf, the U.S. Navy ship *Mazama* and the merchant ship *Durham Victory*, but the former was not loaded with any 16-in. ammunition at all and the latter carried only 48–16-in. A.P. with appropriate service charges, in addition to 1,000 rounds of H.C. with reduced charges. The situation with regard to 6-in. A.P. was little better; there were only 1,100 projectiles in Leyte Gulf—less than 15 minutes firing by one light cruiser.[3]

In view of the limited armour-piercing ammunition available—the *Mississippi* had less than 17 rounds per gun—it was necessary to reserve it for use only against battleships, and in order to render it as effective as possible to use it only at the selected moderate ranges of 17,000 to 20,000 yards; it was, therefore, intended to close fast to the latter and fight the action at moderate ranges. Destroyer attacks were to be launched if conditions were suitable, prior to the engaging of the battle line.

The weather during the early part of the night was very fine. The wind was easterly, average seven knots, temperature 84°, the sky partly cloudy, sea smooth. In the bright moonlight visibility was at least 8,000 yards, but the moon set at 0007, before the enemy reached the Strait. Local squalls then visited the area bringing low overcast clouds and a dark, black night with zero visibility interrupted only by intermittent vivid lightning flashes.

29. Contact with the Enemy, 2310 24th October. The P.T. Boat Attacks

Night 24th/25th Oct. Vice-Admiral Nishimura was ahead of schedule. In the original plan, he was to enter the Surigao Strait about an hour before daylight on the 25th, but he decided to advance the time by some four hours and make his approach at about 0200, though this gain was subsequently lost through delay caused by the *Enterprise's* air attack at 0905 on the 24th.[4] He duly informed Vice-Admiral Kurita of his change of plan, but too late on the 24th for the latter to order him to conform to the original plan.[5]

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[1] *See* Appendix F.

[2] *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22.* Comment by ComBatDiv. Three (Rear-Admiral G. L. Weyler, p. 78–49).

[3] *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22,* pp. 78–48, 49, 51.

[4] The reason for Nishimura's change of plan is not known. The only surviving commanding officer in his fleet, Commander Nishino of the destroyer *Shigure*, hazarded the suggestion that Nishimura was an old style Admiral and preferred a night engagement to a daylight action. The Japanese were certainly aware that darkness reduced the odds against the weaker of two forces, and they had scored some successes in night engagements during the early part of the war.

[5] *Interrogation No. (U.S.S.B.S. 170), Nav. No. 41* (N.I.D. 10086/45, p. 170–3).

Night 24th/25th Oct.

During the approach Vice-Admiral Nishimura at 2100 on 24th, when south of Bohol Island, detached the *Mogami* with the destroyers *Michisio, Yamaguma* and *Asagumo,* to reconnoitre ahead of the battleships; they apparently proceeded as far as Panaon Island, then returned and rejoined the flagship about 2330 on the 24th when the approach disposition was assumed, with two destroyers ahead and one on each bow of the heavy ships, the latter being in line ahead in the order *Yamashiro, Fuso, Mogami* (*see* Diagram II).

The first local contact with Vice-Admiral Nishimura's force was made by P.T. 131, who reported at 2215 two radar targets in 9° 33′ N., 124° 26′ E. (22 miles N.W. of Kamigin Island) steering 80°, speed 25 knots. These were perhaps the *Mogami* and destroyers scouting ahead. At about 2310 P.T. 127 sighted three destroyers and two larger ships, 10 miles south-east of Bohol Island, heading north. This message was received by Rear-Admiral Oldendorf's force about an hour later.[1] From now on the M.T.B.s sent regular reports, though these were not received by all ships.[2] Darkness, rain squalls, the short radar range of the torpedo boats, low height of eye, and the interference caused by the enemy's gunfire, all militated against accuracy of reporting. Reports came in of star shells or flares south of Panaon Island about 0110 and then at 0123 of an enemy force in 09° 40′ N., 125° 16′ E., nine miles south of that island. P.T. 134 shortly after 0200 reported and attacked a very large unidentified ship off the southern tip of Panaon Island. Other M.T.B.s joined in but the attacks were not co-ordinated and the results could not be determined. The enemy opened fire with all guns from 8 in. to 20 mm., illuminating the M.T.B.s with searchlights and star shell and pursuing them with his destroyers. One boat was sunk. Fifteen, however, succeeded in attacking, firing a total of 34 torpedoes, of which 32 ran normally. Seven hits were claimed as possible, and the action of these small craft very probably threw the Japanese command off its balance and contributed to the completeness of their subsequent defeat.[3] It was soon seen that two large ships had successfully passed the line of M.T.B.s. These were, no doubt, the Japanese battleships *Yamashiro* and *Fuso.*

30. Special Attack Group 79.11 (Destroyer Squadron 54) attacks, 0230 25th October. (*See* Plans 3, 4)

By 0230 five destroyers of U.S. Special Attack Group 79.11 (Destroyer Squadron 54, S.O. Captain J. G. Coward, *Remey*) were proceeding down the Strait at 25 knots to attack. These destroyers had been stationed about five miles south of the Battle Line in line across Surigao Strait in approximate latitude 10° 30′ N., where it opens into Leyte Gulf.[4] They were primarily an anti-submarine screen, but with the approval of C.T.G. 77.2, Captain Coward proposed to attack if contact was made with enemy surface vessels. Division 107 (the *Remey, McGowan* and *Melvin*) steamed down the eastern and Division 108 (the *Monssen* and *McDermut*) down the western shore. Contact was made about 10 minutes later at 39,700 yards, and at 0242 the *McGowan* reported unidentified ships, subsequently described as three or

[1] Commander Battle Line, *Action Report, Battle of Surigao Strait,* M.0512/45, p. 5.

[2] C.T.G. 77.3 considered that much more information could have been obtained from the P.T. boats had some of them been used only for reconnaissance purposes, with orders not to attack except in self-defence. (Special *Information Bulletin, No. 22,* pp. 78–107.)

[3] Cincpac, *Report,* p. 75. On the other hand, the only available Japanese evidence is that no hits were made and the only effect of the attacks was to cause the Japanese ships to alter course towards the M.T.B.s, in order to present smaller targets.

[4] *Mertz* and *McNair* of this squadron were guarding the eastern entrance to Leyte Gulf.

Night 24th/25th Oct.

more, in column heading north, bearing 184°, distant 18 miles. Actually, the Japanese report that they assumed battle disposition, in line ahead with the destroyers leading, about 10 minutes earlier.[1] At 0250 Division 107 began gradually to bear round to a course 120° to gain the firing point. Both the groups of destroyers were soon discovered by the enemy and were shortly afterwards straddled by his fire. At 0300 the eastern group worked up to 30 knots and then to full speed and commenced to zigzag and lay a smoke screen.

The eastern group attacked first, firing 27 torpedoes about 0300, followed by the western group, which fired 20 torpedoes a few minutes later, and both groups commenced their retirement to the north at high speed under fire of the enemy, covered by smoke. Salvoes landed near the *Remey* and the *Melvin*, which were not completely screened, but no ship was hit. The enemy also fired torpedoes at the group, without success.

As he retired, ComDesRon 54, Commander of the Special Attack Group, reported that the general concensus of opinion estimated the enemy force at two battleships, one or two cruisers, and one destroyer, though a later estimate put the force correctly at three heavy ships and four destroyers, namely, the leading detachment (Vice-Admiral Nishimura's) of the Southern Force—the *Fuso*, *Yamashiro*, heavy cruiser *Mogami*, and four destroyers. The Fifth Fleet, some miles astern, had not yet come in contact.

It was thought that Division 108 might have made one torpedo hit on a battleship, for several ships of Rear-Admiral Oldendorf's force saw the explosion.[2] Following the torpedo attacks the enemy appeared to separate into two groups of four ships each through the rear ships dropping astern, and to be in this disposition when the destroyers of the Right Flank Force on the west side of the Strait, a few minutes later carried out an attack in their turn.

31. Attack by Destroyers of Right Flank Force, 0304 25th October. (*See* Plan 5)

The destroyers of the Right Flank Force (Destroyer Division 47) had been lying inshore near Pandan Point, but now had come south and reached a position three miles due east of Hinundayan. This Division was organized in two attack groups as follows:—

Attack Group 1.2	*Attack Group* 2.2
U.S.S. *Hutchins* (ComDesRon 24) (Captain K. M. McManes)	H.M.A.S. *Arunta* (S.O.) (Commander A. E. Buchanan, R.A.N.)
U.S.S. *Daly*	U.S.S. *Killen*
U.S.S. *Bache*	U.S.S. *Beale*

At 0304 Rear-Admiral Berkey ordered it to attack. The individual ships had already made radar contact and were plotting the enemy, whose average course and speed were 000°, 18 knots. Commander Destroyer Squadron 24 now led round to the southward in column at 15 knots. After an initial misunderstanding regarding speed, caused by a signal which apparently

[1] *Interrogation Nav., No. 79, U.S.S.B.S., No. 390.* *See* Diagram II.

[2] Report of Commander Battle Line, M.0512/45, p. 7. C.T.G. 79.11 in his comments (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, pp. 78–106) states that a number of hits were made and the two heaviest ships were hit and forced to drop astern. Another ship suffered a large explosion. The enemy lost all initiative and his formation was completely disrupted. The only available Japanese source states that no torpedo hits were made in this attack (*Interrogation Nav. No. 79, U.S.S. B.S. No. 390*).

was received incorrectly by the *Arunta* the two groups separated at 0310 by order of the Destroyer Squadron Commander, Attack Group 1.2 to follow down the Strait the destroyers of the Western Special Attack Group, and *Arunta* to lead Attack Group 2.2 in the wake of the Eastern Special Attack Group. However, the *Arunta's* group never reached the eastern shore, but proceeded on a general course 150° to the firing point.

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(a) Attack on the "Yamashiro" by Attack Group 2.2. (*See* Plan 5)

The *Arunta's* group received the order from ComDesRon 24 to attack with torpedoes at 0311. After the torpedo attack by Destroyer Squadron 54 the enemy appeared on the *Killen's* screen as one large ship and three smaller leading a second, somewhat similar group of about four ships.

Unfortunately, the three destroyers *Arunta*, *Killen* and *Beale*, of Attack Group 2.2, had never before worked together as a unit. Communications were indifferent.[1] Rapid changes of course and speed were made without notice, and funnel smoke lying in the area added to the difficulties of the two rear ships, *Killen* and *Beale*. The manœuvring of the group resolved itself into "a simple follow the leader and reliance on the initiative and skill of destroyers astern",[2] in which, however, a high degree of co-operation was attained.

Since the torpedo attacks were not being supported by gunfire Commander Buchanan intended to reach a firing position between 6,000 and 7,000 yards on the port bow of the enemy. The approach course was such that little adjustment was necessary to fire torpedoes, and, communication being difficult, no line of bearing was ordered. The speed of the destroyers was 25 knots, mean course 145°. About two minutes before firing torpedoes the destroyers commenced making smoke.

At 0319 the enemy fired starshell which burst, some to the right and others short. The *Killen's* radar screen, 15,000 yards (short) scale showed a group of four ships in column, estimated as a battleship leading two cruisers or large destroyers, followed by a destroyer. The second group was not visible on the short scale. In the expectation that, as the enemy was not being engaged a heavy column of fire would follow the starshell, Commander Buchanan gave the order to fire torpedoes to port at 0320, the range being 7,200 yards, and one minute later the *Arunta* fired four torpedoes—all she carried—with a spread of 14°, at the large ship, apparently the *Yamashiro*, leading the enemy formation, bearing 120°, depth settings 6 ft. and 8 ft., estimated range, 6,900 yards.[3]

No heavy volume of fire followed. The only fire seen was a single salvo, apparently about 4-in. calibre, which fell 300 yards short.

The *Killen* and *Beale* fired their torpedoes shortly after the *Arunta*.[4] The *Killen*, convinced that the target was a battleship and that there were more to come fired a half salvo of five torpedoes to port, 1° spread, depth setting 22 ft., range 8,700 yards.[5] The track angle was about 90°, giving the maximum

[1] This is explained in *Arunta's* Report, M.01976/45, p. 6. *Killen*, however, in her *Action Report*, M.04530/45, p. 5, states that communications were generally satisfactory.

[2] *Arunta's* Report M.01976/45, p. 7.

[3] Ibid, pp. 3, 10, 11.

[4] The *Killen's* track chart (M.04765/45, p. 6) shows her firing at 0325, but her times are about three to four minutes fast on *Arunta's*.

[5] Ibid, p. 2.

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chance of hitting.[1] The target was apparently the same as that fired at by the *Arunta*, namely, the *Yamashiro*, and the *Killen's* position at the moment of firing was 10° 19′ 30″ N., 125° 19′ 30″ E.[2] The two destroyers then followed the *Arunta* round and made for the western shore. Four and a half minutes later the *Killen* fired two torpedoes at the same enemy ship, then bearing 111°, range 8,100 yards,[3] depth setting 6 ft. As the second torpedo was fired the target appeared to be altering course, and fire was checked.

Speed was reduced to 20 knots at 0330 and the three destroyers stopped making smoke. A minute later, the enemy fired a salvo or two in their direction. One fell between the *Killen* and the *Beale* immediately following illumination by starshell.

At 0345 ComDesRon 24's group, which were to the southward and had fired their torpedoes, were heard to engage the enemy with gunfire. Commander Buchanan thereupon turned his group to the south in support. Three minutes later the Killen fired her last three torpedoes to port at the enemy battleship—evidently the *Yamashiro* again—on her port beam, range 11,300 yards.[4] These torpedoes missed owing to the target altering course before they crossed her path.

The group opened fire with their 5-in. guns at 0352, the *Arunta* at enemy destroyers, the *Killen* at the battleship now bearing 092°, range 12,500 yards.[5] Firing ceased at 0356 and the group continued south at 15 knots until, intercepting a report by one of the American heavy ships in the north, erroneously describing them as enemy, Commander Buchanan hastily retired at 25 knots to the north. However, Rear-Admiral Oldendorf was alive to the situation and prevented any untoward happening.

It was considered that in these attacks the *Killen* made torpedo hits on the battleship *Yamashiro* and thus probably contributed to the sinking of the vessel which apparently occurred at 0349.[6]

(b) Attack by Attack Group 1.2. (*See* Plan 5)

Running down the west side of the Strait on course 180°, Attack Group 1.2, the *Hutchins* (ComDesRon 24), *Daly* and *Bache* at 0321 increased speed to 25 knots and steered to attack, making funnel smoke. The *Monssen* and *McDermut* of Special Attack Group 79.11 were passed close aboard to starboard as they retired to the north-west at high speed after making their torpedo attacks.

As seen on the S.G. radar the enemy disposition consisted of two groups of ships. Ahead were four ships abreast, probably the destroyer screen, at intervals of about 500 yards. Ten cables astern was a second group of three large ships formed on a line of bearing normal to the course, 010°, at intervals of about 500 yards. One or more smaller targets were a few hundred yards west of these ships. It was estimated that there were nine ships in all in this group.

[1] Ibid, Second Endorsement, p. 9.

[2] This is the position shown on the Track Chart of Night Action in Surigao Strait in *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–19. It does not exactly agree with *Killen's* Navigational Chart, M.04765/45, p. 7, but no doubt represents the corrected position.

[3] *Killen's* Report, M.04765/45, p. 2. But her track chart, p. 6, shows the range as about 8,500 yards.

[4] *Killen's* Track Chart, M.04765/45, p. 6.

[5] *Killen's* Report M.04765/45, p. 3. But her track chart shows the range as 13,500 yards.

[6] *Killen's* Report, Fourth Endorsement (by Commander Seventh Fleet), M.04765/45, p. 11. Prisoners of war stated that the *Yamashiro* was hit on the port side by four torpedoes before 0400 (Cincpac, *Report*, p. 76).

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The enemy attempted to illuminate the attacking group with star shells, but all burst short until 0326 when one burst 1,000 yards broad on *Daly's* bow. The *Hutchins* led round to port to 050° and at 0329 completed a 16-point turn and on course 000° fired five torpedoes to starboard.[1] The *Daly* followed in her wake.

At this moment the *Daly* detected with her underwater sound equipment the approach of two torpedoes. They were too close to permit evasive manœuvre and at 0330 their wakes were seen. Fortunately both missed her, the nearest by no more than 50 yards ahead, crossing her bow from starboard to port.

The *Daly* held on her course, and at 0332 in 10° 18′ 30″ N., 125° 18′ 00″ E. she fired five torpedoes to starboard at the largest ship in the second group, bearing 099°, range 10,700 yards, depth setting six ft. Three minutes later the *Bache* fired a half salvo of five torpedoes[2] and the formation again altered course 16 points to port, back to their original southerly course. Funnel smoke was discontinued at 0338. The *Daly* claims that three large explosions in quick succession, unmistakably torpedo hits, seen at 0344 bearing about 045° were caused by her torpedoes. " The ship which was hit by these torpedoes," stated the *Daly*, " immediately opened fire with major and minor calibre guns, frantically throwing steel through 360°, and initiating general gun action between both forces."[3]

At 0341 the *Daly* opened gunfire in radar control at a relatively small target to port, bearing 025°[4], range 11,000 yards, which appeared to have turned to a south course and was steaming at 16 knots. The indications both by sight and radar were that the *Daly's* salvos were hitting, but at 0344 the *Hutchins*, which was apparently on her starboard bow, altered course to port and crossed her bows, and the *Daly* checked fire until 0347 when she had turned to port in the *Hutchins'* wake to course 050.° Radar indicated further hits, but the only results that could be seen visually were small flashes on the target, which the *Daly* thought were caused by projectile impact.

At the conclusion of the attacks by the destroyers of the Right Flank Force there remained only 15 torpedoes amongst the six ships. Gun ammunition also was very low, the *Hutchins* having no more than 50 rounds per gun.[5]

32. Attack by Destroyers of Left Flank Force (Destroyer Squadron 56) 0333/25. (*See* Plan 4)

By 0333 C.T.G. 77.2 (Rear-Admiral Oldendorf) had co-ordinated the various enemy reports received from the light forces in the Strait and was able to form a picture of two columns of ships, comprising at least two battleships and four to six heavy or light cruisers with probably six to eight destroyers.[6] He now launched the destroyers of his Left Flank Force to attack.

[1] It is not known what the target was, but *Daly* states that it was a different one from that which she fired at. This sub-section is based on the *Daly's* Report, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, pp. 78–21/25. No other reports from the group are forthcoming. Prisoner of war survivors state that the destroyer *Yamagumo* was hit by one torpedo about 0330 and was reported sunk at 0400 (Cincpac, *Report*, p. 77).

[2] The target is not known.

[3] *Daly's* Report, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–23.

[4] Ibid. But her plan of the action shows the enemy bearing to have been 090°.

[5] *U.S.S.* " *Boise* ", *Action Report*, M.013238/44, p. 10.

[6] Comment by C.T.G. 77.2, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–105.

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At 0333 when the order to attack was received, the nine destroyers of Destroyer Squadron 56[1] were disposed in three sections in line ahead, the rear section (No. 3) being approximately one mile north of the cruisers of the Left Flank Force (which were in line ahead on a course 90°, speed five knots, position 10° 30′ 30″ N., 125° 26′ 30″ E.). The senior officer[2] in the U.S.S. *Newcomb* led the centre section (No. 1). The squadron had made radar contact with an enemy force, estimated to number three ships, at 0320, range 33,000 yards, bearing 165°. A plot was commenced and showed the enemy to be on a zigzag course based north at 12 knots speed.

On receiving the order to attack, the squadron turned to a southerly course and manœuvred to make a co-ordinated three-section attack from sectors ahead and on each bow of the enemy. Visibility was much reduced at this time, being 7,000 yards for ships of cruiser size,[3] and the *Newcomb*, and probably other ships as well, conducted the attack entirely by radar control.

At 0353 ComDesRon 56 increased speed to 25 knots and commenced the attack on course 200°–210°. At this time two targets were on the radar screen. One large target was seen on SG radar at about 23,000 yards, whilst a target, believed to be other heavy ships, was seen on the same bearing at 33,000 yards, glowing dimly. The closer of the two was chosen by ComDesRon 56 as his torpedo target; no screen of light forces was seen near it. The plot of the target indicated course north, speed 12 knots, but about 0400, when the range was 8,300 yards, the target altered course eight points to port. At about 7,000 yards the *Newcomb* turned to 270°, the enemy plot indicating at the time a course 290°, speed nine knots. Four minutes later ComDesRon 56 fired a half salvo of five torpedoes set to six ft. depth, range 6,200 yards. About seven minutes after firing, the target, identified visually as a battleship of the *Fuso* class, again altered course about eight points to port, so that at the correct time for contact she was only in the area of the two torpedoes on the left. Two heavy explosions were seen at this time, and the target ship was seen to be burning fiercely as she proceeded south until radar contact was lost at 0440,[4] it was presumed through the target sinking. At 0406, two minutes after firing torpedoes, the *Newcomb* altered course to north and increased speed to 32 knots. Zigzagging and making funnel smoke the section two minutes later bore round to a course about 060° for their post-attack rendezvous. Several splashes were seen close aboard. Smoke was stopped at 0410.

Meanwhile Sections 2 and 3 had struck[5] from positions on each bow of the advancing Japanese force. The destroyers of Section 2 failed to observe in time the enemy's change of course to the westward, and most probably their torpedoes missed ahead, though the *Bryant's* torpedoes probably missed to port owing to an incorrect estimate of the enemy's course.[6] The torpedoes of Section 3 also probably missed ahead through the enemy turning to port.

It is very probable that some hits were made by the torpedoes of the squadron on the *Fuso*, and it is possible that the destroyer *Asagumo* received a crippling hit at about the same time.[7]

[1] *See* Appendix E.

[2] Capt. R. N. Smoot.

[3] *C.T.G. 77.2, Action Report, Battle of Surigao Strait*, M.03008/45, p. 2.

[4] The time appears to be incorrectly recorded, for it is evident from other reports that this target disappeared about 0419.

[5] Section Two apparently fired torpedoes at 0355 and Section Three at 0358.

[6] *C.T.G. 77.2, Action Report, Battle of Surigao Strait*, M.03008/45, p. 2.

[7] Ibid, Endorsement by Commander Seventh Fleet, p. 25. The battleship target was thought at the time to be the *Yamashiro* but the Japanese accounts which have since become available make it clear that the *Fuso* was the ship fired at.

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Throughout the torpedo attack the *Newcomb's* section had been under fire from the enemy, as were also the other two sections towards the end of their approach to the firing position. Section 1 was also in the direct line of fire of the American battleships and cruisers who were now engaging the enemy, but as soon as this information was passed to Rear-Admiral Oldendorf, the O.T.C., he immediately ordered all ships to cease fire and Destroyer Squadron 56 to clear the area. Meanwhile, salvoes from both sides fell near, and about 0406 the third ship in the line, the *Albert W. Grant*, was hit, both by the Japanese and by one of the American light cruisers.[1] She slowed down and stopped at 0426. The *Newcomb* and the *Richard P. Leary* which had reached their post-attack rendezvous three miles north of Hibuson Island turned back at 0432 to assist her. The *Albert W. Grant* was severely damaged, and had several casualties, and she had to be towed clear of the battle area by the *Newcomb*.

33. Results of the Destroyer Attacks. "Yamashiro" and "Yamagumo" sunk.[2]

The results of the various attacks by the Allied destroyers were disastrous to Vice-Admiral Nishimura's force. The battleship *Yamashiro* was hit by a torpedo which apparently caused her magazine to explode, and the ship broke in half and sank at 0349. The three leading destroyers, *Michisio, Asagumo* and *Yamagumo* were hit. The first named became unnavigable, fell out of the disposition and sank at 0335; the *Asagumo* sank about 1720 after cruisers and destroyers had pursued and shelled her at close range; and the *Yamagumo* sank at 0355. No torpedoes hit the *Mogami* but she was badly damaged by gunfire. Alone of the seven ships of "C" Force the destroyer *Shigure* escaped unscathed. The torpedoes came from both west and east, but those which caused the damage to the Japanese force appear to have been fired in the attacks by the Right Flank Force destroyers (Special Attack Group) about 0330.

34. The Gun Action, 0350 25th October. (*See* Plan 6)

From the moment of first report at 2310/24th Rear-Admiral Weyler, Commander Battle Line, had been endeavouring to interpret the information he received from radar and the ships in contact with the enemy. At 0315 he regarded the situation as follows:—

(*a*) A small destroyer screen about seven miles to the north-west of a group of two heavy units, exact type undetermined. [Nishimura's "C" Force]

(*b*) The remainder of the force approaching but not yet visible on the plan presentation indicator or the radar plot. [Japanese Fifth Fleet]

By 0330 it seemed that the destroyer screen had either been eliminated or had joined the heavy units and taken station ahead, and that this group now consisted of two of three cruisers or destroyers in the van followed by two battleships in line ahead the range of the battleships being about 3,000 yards, course north, speed 16 knots.[3] The *Portland*, one of the cruisers of the Left Flank Force, who made initial radar contact at 0251 at a range of 54,000 yards, considered that the leading group was composed of four destroyers, two battleships, two heavy cruisers or light cruisers in line ahead in that order, with a

[1] Ibid, p. 2.

[2] This section is based mainly on the *Interrogation* [of Comdr. Nishino, the only surviving Japanese commanding officer], *Nav. No. 79, U.S.S.B.S. No. 390*.

[3] *Action Report, Battle of Surigao Strait*, M.0512/45, pp. 3, 7.

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second group composed of one heavy and four light units several miles astern.[1] The inference was that the leading group comprised the two Japanese battleships, the heavy cruiser *Mogami* and four destroyers; and the rear group the Fifth Fleet. Apart from the last ship in the line which appeared to have stopped after the first or second destroyer torpedo attack[2] the *Portland* considered that the enemy ships continued to maintain their formation until they began to be hit by gunfire at 0352. The cruiser *Boise*, in the Right Flank Group, which had been tracking the enemy since she first made contact at 0252 at a range of 47,900 yards, thought that the course and speed of the two enemy battleships diverged from 0304 onwards, and that whilst both ships maintained a mean course north the *Fuso* drew ahead and when the gun action commenced at 0351 she was some 4,000 yards to the northward of the *Yamashiro*. It seems probable, however, that the latter had fallen out and sunk by then and that the *Boise's* second battleship was actually the heavy cruiser *Mogami*.[3]

(a) The Left Flank Force Cruisers[4]

The cruisers of the Left Flank Force opened fire at 0351 whilst on course 090°. The *Portland*, second ship in the line, took as the target of her nine 8-in. guns the *Fuso* bearing 186°, range 15,500 yards; but after checking fire at 0356 for two minutes owing to the target being under fire from a number of ships and burning brightly she shifted target at 0358 to the second heavy ship (the *Mogami*) which had turned to southward some five minutes before the *Fuso* and was now retiring at high speed, the range on opening fire being 19,300, bearing 194°. This ship was soon out of range, and at 0406, just before the O.T.C. ordered cease fire the *Portland* shifted back to her first target, bearing 199°, range 14,200 yards. Some fire was directed at the Left Flank Force by the enemy, and at 0404 the *Denver* reported being straddled, but no ship was hit.

(b) The Right Flank Force Cruisers

The cruisers of the Right Flank Force opened fire by Rear-Admiral Berkey's orders[5] immediately after the Left Flank Force. Their approximate position at the time was 10° 30′ 45″ N., 125° 19′ 25″ E., bearing about 250°, 15,000 yards from the Battle Line; and like the latter they were on course 090°, stationed on a line of bearing 050° from the cruiser guide in the order *Phœnix* (guide), *Boise*, *Shropshire*.

The light cruiser *Boise* opened fire with her main battery at 0351½ on the *Fuso*, bearing 153°, range 18,100 yards. She maintained a steady rate of fire and reports that many hits were seen. The flagship *Phoenix*, sister ship to the *Boise*, opened fire half a minute later in full radar control at the same target estimated range 16,600 yards. After four spotting salvoes with high capacity projectiles from the forward and after 6-in. groups alternately the range was

[1] *U.S.S. " Portland ", Action Report*, M.02343/45, p. 2.

[2] This may have been the enemy ship which was the subject of the following signal: " 0348—C.T.G. 77.3 from ComDesRon 24—' We have one dead in the water—we are going to present him with five fish.' " (*U.S.S. " Boise ", Action against Japanese Force in Surigao Strait*, M.013238/44, p. 8.)

[3] Plate VI in Cincpac, *Report* supports this view.

[4] The only reports forthcoming from cruisers of the Left Flank Force are from *Portland* (M.02343/45), and a short report (? extract) with little detail from *Denver* printed in *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–20.

[5] M.04764/45 *H.M.A.S. " Shropshire ", Battle Report*, p. 8 and M.013238/44, *U.S.S. " Boise ", Action Report*, p. 3.

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found and full salvos were fired using armour-piercing shells from the tenth round onwards. The force and direction of the wind cleared the smoke between salvos and rendered optical spotting and observation possible. The *Shropshire*, equipped with a type of radar which was not designed for main armament fire control was unable to open fire until 0356, when she commenced firing eight 8-in. gun broadsides in full radar control, range 15,800 yards, her target also being the *Fuso*. The *Shropshire's* turrets had been in service for 16 years, but the rate of fire exceeded any that had previously been attained.[1] Unlike the *Shropshire*, the American ships were all using a flashless propellant, and it is thought that the enemy, being unable to use radar control, fired at the *Shropshire's* flashes, mistaking her for a capital ship, for at 0358 splashes were seen by the *Boise* near the *Shropshire*, though the ship was not hit.

At 0357 fire was checked and a 16-point turn to starboard was commenced to course 270°. Firing was resumed at 0401, but at 0409 Rear-Admiral Oldendorf ordered cease fire on account of the cruisers firing into Destroyer Squadron 56 further down the Strait. By this time the target was burning fiercely, rendering possible its optical identification as a battleship of the *Fuso* or *Ise* class. Her forward turrets were still firing. At 0421, after ComDesRon 56 had reported that except for the damaged *A. W. Grant* his destroyers were clear of the channel the O.T.C. ordered the Right Flank Force to resume fire, but no target identifiable as hostile was within effective range, and as all the enemy ships appeared to be in full retreat down the Strait, the forces returned north at 0538[2] to resume the patrol of Leyte Gulf.

(c) The Battle Line[3]

By about 0330 Rear-Admiral Weyler decided that the range was closing so rapidly that by waiting for it to close to 20,000 yards as originally intended he would lose some of the range advantage he possessed in having his guns and his shell hoists loaded with armour-piercing shell.[4] He, therefore, directed the Battle Line to open fire at 26,000 yards (0333),[5] in order to permit deliberate fire whilst the range was closing to the moderate range band.

No fire distribution signals were made since it was felt that the individual commanding officers had as clear, and in the case of ships equipped with modern radar, a much clearer, picture than the Commander of the Battle Line himself, for the radar equipment of Rear-Admiral Weyler's flagship, the *Mississippi* was of an inadequate type. At 0349 he informed Rear-Admiral Oldendorf of his intentions, and was told that the O.T.C. was himself about to open fire.[6] When the range had closed to 24,000 yards and the Battle

[1] *Shropshire* in her *Battle Report* (M.04764/45, p. 1) states: " A very high rate of fire was attained in rapid salvos. As many as eight broadsides in two minutes being fired." Rear-Admiral Berkey's comment is: " The overall performance was not fast." (Ibid, First Endorsement, p. 13.)

[2] *Boise's* Track Chart (M.013238/44, p. 17).

[3] This description of the battleships' engagement is based on the reports of the *Mississippi*, *Maryland* and *Pennsylvania*. No reports are forthcoming from the remaining three battleships.

[4] Battleships had been ordered to load projectile hoists with A.P. and to be prepared thereafter to shift to H.C. or continue with A.P. Each gun had thus five rounds of A.P. immediately available. (*Action Report, Battle of Surigao Strait*, M.0512/45, pp. 2, 3.)

[5] Op. cit., p. 7. But " *Pennsylvania*," *Action Report*, M.0119/45, p. 6, states that the battleships were ordered to open fire by ComTask Group 77.2 (*i.e.*, Rear-Admiral Oldendorf.) The range 26,000 yards, was intended to be that of the leading enemy battleship, neglecting the destroyer screen.

[6] [*ComBatDiv 3*] *Action Report*, M.0512/45, p. 4. U.S.S. *Boise*, in her report (M.013235/44, p. 3) states that the O.T.C. gave the order to open fire at 0350.

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Line had not commenced firing Captain T. D. Ruddock of the *Maryland*, Commander of Battleship Division 4 (U.S.S. *Maryland* and *West Virginia*) directed the *West Virginia* to report that she was ready to open fire and then commence firing.

The Battle Line at this time was on an easterly course, steaming at standard speed, 15 knots, to which they had increased at 0338. This course was taking them away from the Japanese ships, and to give a better turret training angle Rear-Admiral Weyler at 0354 altered course 30° towards the enemy. The order was *West Virginia, Maryland, Mississippi* (flagship), *Tennessee, California, Pennsylvania.*

Almost simultaneously with the alteration of course the Battle Line opened fire. The *West Virginia*, who had been plotting her target by radar from a range of 41,000–42,000 yards with clear target indications in range and bearing, had no hesitation in opening fire in full radar control. She was followed by the *Tennessee* and the *California*. These three ships were equipped with an up-to-date type of radar which gave them a great advantage over the *Mississippi, Maryland* and *Pennsylvania* in night firing.

The disposition of the Japanese ships at the moment of opening fire was apparently as follows. The *Yamashiro* had been sunk a few minutes earlier. The *Fuso* bore 192°, range 20,900 yards from the flagship *Mississippi*. A second large ship, presumably the heavy cruiser *Mogami*, bore 196°, range 23,800 yards. The three destroyers (one of the four, the *Yamagumo*, having been sunk by the same torpedo attack as sank the *Yamashiro*) were now apparently following astern of the heavy ships.[1] The enemy were steering an approximately north course, so that Rear-Admiral Oldendorf's ships, without necessity to manoeuvre, were in the classic position across their T.

The *West Virginia* took as her target the leading heavy ship the *Fuso*, range 24,400 yards. The *Maryland*, after vainly attempting to find a target by means of the *West Virginia's* tracers finally found and opened fire on the second heavy ship just as the latter was altering course to port to retreat down the Strait and thus presenting to the *Maryland* a broadside target. The *Mississippi* received a message from her Flag Plot which she interpreted as instructions for her to take care of the rear enemy ships or groups. Since this was a logical fire distribution in the existing situation, she shifted to one of the rear targets, but found her older-type radar inadequate at the greater distance. Before a solution could be obtained, the rear enemy group reversed course and opened the range still further. A shift back was made to one of the leading and closer targets, but there was time for only one full salvo before the order to cease fire.

By 0400 it was apparent that the leading American ships, the *West Virginia* and the *Maryland*, were getting under the lee of Hibuson Island and that the enemy had decreased speed. Moreover, the Battle Line was beginning to overlap the Left Flank Force. At 0402, on the suggestion of Rear-Admiral Oldendorf, Rear-Admiral Weyler ordered his column to turn together to starboard to course 270°. The signal, "Turn 15" (= alter course 150°), was incorrectly reported to the commanding officer of the *California* as an alteration of 15°, and the ship therefore steadied on 135°,[2] and so for a time blanketed the *Tennessee's* fire. Eventually she (0408) took up her proper station astern of the latter. The other ships continued to fire on the turn.

As the turn progressed it became apparent that the enemy had also altered course to the westward. The second heavy ship, the *Mogami*, had in fact

[1] Report of *Tennessee's* Gunnery Officer quoted in Cincpac, *Report*, p. 82.

[2] Comment by *U.S.S. "California," Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–80.

turned some minutes earlier and was retreating down the Strait. The *Fuso* turned five minutes later, at 0400, and for some nine minutes steered a westerly course before turning south. At 0407 ComDesRon 56's report was received that the American ships were firing at the left flank destroyers in mid-channel, and at 0409 the O.T.C. ordered all ships to cease fire so as to permit the damaged *A. W. Grant* and the other destroyers to clear the area.

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At 0415 the destroyer *R. P. Leary* of the Left Flank Force, during her retirement northwards after carrying out torpedo attack reported seeing torpedo tracks.[1] Rear-Admiral Weyler assumed this to mean that the enemy had fired torpedoes to the northward, and he turned the Battle Line away in order to clear the danger, a manœuvre which took him too far north to resume the engagement. It was not Rear-Admiral Oldendorf's intention that the battleships should follow the enemy into the restricted waters of the Strait, and Rear-Admiral Weyler, for his part, was influenced by the consideration that although damage to the Battle Line at this juncture would not jeopardize its ability to defeat the Japanese Southern Force, the stronger enemy force in the Sibuyan Sea was not yet completely eliminated from the picture.[2] This, then, completed the engagement as far as the battleships were concerned. None of them appear to have been under fire from the enemy, though some splashes of shots falling short were seen.[3] Although the Japanese used star shell and searchlights, no vessel of the main formation was illuminated.

The difference in the radar equipment of the battleships was reflected in the number of rounds fired respectively.

	Number of Salvos fired	*Number of Rounds fired*
F.H. radar equipped ships :—		
West Virginia	16	93
Tennessee	13	69
California	9	63
F.C. radar equipped ships :—		
Mississippi	1	12
Maryland	6	48
Pennsylvania	0	0

In a little over nine minutes firing the *West Virginia* expended half her outfit of ammunition suitable for heavy targets.[4] Firing in full radar control, her report states that every salvo was a straddle.[5]

35. Sinking of the "Fuso"

"The enemy", wrote the Gunnery Officer of the *Shropshire*,[6] "must have been simply appalled by this drenching fire which was being most

[1] ComBatLine Report, M.0512/45, p. 9. Rear-Admiral Oldendorf's covering letter to the Action Reports of the destroyers of Squadron 56 (*C.T.G. 77.2 Action Report*, M.03008/45, p. 2) says: "U.S.S. *Richard P. Leary* reported tracks of enemy torpedoes apparently headed for our Battle Line or Right Flank Forces. They did not reach their target." No time is given, but the entry follows the statement of damage to the *A. W. Grant* at 0406. It is possible the torpedoes were fired by the cruisers of the Fifth Fleet (*see* Section 38).

[2] *Endorsements to U.S.S. "Pennsylvania's" Action Report*, M.02353/45, p. 29, and ComBatDiv 3 *Action Report*, M.0512/45, pp. 4, 5.

[3] From the interrogations of Japanese officers it appears that their ships had no special equipment for firing in radar control. The Americans used flashless propellant.

[4] ComBatDiv 4 *Action Report*, M.0124/45, p. 2.

[5] Comment by C.T.G. 77.2, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–50.

[6] Lieut.-Comdr. W. S. Bracegirdle, D.S.C., R.A.N.

Night 24th/25th Oct.

accurately poured on to them ".[1] To the mighty 16-in. salvos of the battleships and the 8-in. broadsides of the heavy cruisers there was added the hosepipe shooting—for so it appeared—of light cruisers such as the *Phoenix* and *Boise* who could fire 200 or more 6-in. shells per minute. Such high expenditure evidently disquieted Rear-Admiral Berkey, for 3½ minutes after his light cruisers opened fire he ordered " Fire slow and deliberately ".[2] The tracers used by the American ships enabled their shells to be followed right on to the target. Almost from the time of commence firing at 0350 the enemy ships appeared to observers to be a continual mass of flame and explosions, with the exception of two which appeared to Commander-in-Chief to turn round and escape at high speed to the southward, according to the Captain of the *Denver*. The leading battleship, the *Fuso*, which had turned to a westerly course at 0400, was sighted by the Japanese destroyer *Shigure*, on fire and apparently unnavigable ; she bore round to the south just before Rear-Admiral Oldendorf gave the order to cease fire at 0409. About 10 minutes later she disappeared from the ships' radar screens, and though no eye saw her sink there is no doubt but that this was her end.

It is difficult to link the reported incidents of the battle with the actual enemy losses as verified later. In the main, the Allied ships were firing by radar rather than at identifiable vessels ; and it was not always certain whether the target on the screen was one enemy vessel, or two, or a group. The enemy ships twisted, turned and scattered under the devastating fire to which they were subjected ; but the only movements definitely discernible were those of their advance up the Strait and the subsequent retirement of the survivors.

The comparative immunity of the Allied ships from loss or damage may be ascribed, in part, to the low efficiency of the Japanese radar, which was not suitable for fire control, and to the fact that the ships' installations were ineffective for search in this particular engagement.[3] The Japanese were aware of the presence of a strong Allied supporting force in Leyte Gulf, but they did not know when or exactly where it would be met. Rear-Admiral Oldendorf, on the other hand, received sufficient warning by his patrols stationed in the approaches to the Surigao Strait. The column formation of the Japanese facilitated radar interception, and the majority of the American ships were able to plot the approaching enemy by radar from well outside gun range and to fire their torpedoes and guns in full radar control. It was perhaps a disadvantage that the *Yamashiro* and *Fuso* had not previously operated with the remainder of the force.

36. Sinking of the " Michisio " and " Asagumo "

Only one of the four Japanese destroyers which led Vice-Admiral Nishimura's force as it pushed into the Strait, came unscathed through the American destroyer attacks and the gunfire of the battleships and cruisers. This was the *Shigure*, which when the *Fuso* began to be hit, retired down the Straits, receiving as she turned a single shell which penetrated an oil tank and failed to explode. The concussion of near miss shell bursts eventually caused damage to her rudder, and at 0435 she lost steering control and stopped for half an hour to effect repairs. Whilst thus engaged, she sighted the Japanese Fifth Fleet coming up the Strait, but apart from identifying herself and

[1] M.01105/45, " *Shropshire* ", *Night Action 25.10.44*, Encl. No. 2, Part IV.

[2] M.013238/44, *U.S.S.* " *Boise* ", *Action in Surigao Strait*, p. 8.

[3] This is confirmed by the interrogations.

reporting her steering difficulties she gave no information as to the situation to Vice-Admiral Shima,[1] and it was not until 1018 that day, whilst retiring through the Mindanao Sea, that her commanding officer, Commander Nishino, reported to Admiral Toyoda and Vice-Admiral Kurita that Nishimura's force had been annihilated.[2] Night 24th/25th Oct.

Meanwhile, the destroyers *Michisio* and *Asagumo*, which had been damaged by the American destroyer attacks about 0330, were lying crippled in the Strait. At 0427 Rear-Admiral Oldendorf ordered the Left Flank Force to resume fire[3] and at 0434 the cruisers turned to a southerly course to " pursue the retiring enemy ". The tactical situation and restricted waters compelled caution, and speed of 15 knots was ordered, which was increased to 20 knots at 0520.[4] Three burning enemy vessels were in sight to the southward and fire was opened on one apparently undamaged enemy ship, thought to be either a large destroyer or a light cruiser (? the *Shigure*).

The Left Flank Force screen was joined about 0550 by the six destroyers of Division X[5] under Commander M. G. Hubbard of the *Claxton*, which had been screening the Battle Line. The division had been ordered at 0432 to proceed south down the Strait to make a torpedo attack on the retiring enemy at 0513, at a range of 31,000 yards, but almost at once it became clear that it would be daylight before the destroyers could get into position for attack, and they were accordingly ordered to join the screen of the Left Flank cruisers. At 0543 Rear-Admiral Oldendorf ordered cease fire and returned with the Left Flank Force northward up the Strait[6] in order to avoid possible enemy torpedo attacks.

Daybreak[7] revealed some burning enemy ships on the horizon.[8] About half an hour later Commander Cruiser Division 12, Rear-Admiral Hayler, was ordered to take the Left Flank Force light cruisers *Denver* and *Columbia*, screened by the *Robinson*, *Bryant* and *Halford*, on a sweep down the Strait to sink the cripples. The *Claxton*, which had remained behind when the Left Flank Force turned northward, to pick up survivors, of whom there were at least 150 within a radius of 2,000 yards, sank by gunfire one badly-damaged destroyer. This may have been the *Michisio*, which with the *Asagumo*, had been crippled earlier in the battle and sank about this time. The destroyer screen of the Left Flank Force also sank a destroyer, thought to be the *Asagumo*, at 0721 in approximately 10° 5′ 50″ N., 125° 24′ 20″ E. Most of the survivors refused to take lifelines, but a few were picked up. a.m. 25th Oct.

37. Sinking of the " Mogami "

The surface engagement was now at an end, and out of Vice-Admiral Nishimura's fleet there remained afloat only the heavy cruiser *Mogami*, and the destroyer *Shigure* ; the latter was making good her escape, in default of orders, having appreciated that the remainder of the force had been destroyed.

[1] *Interrogation*. " The reason I did not communicate directly with Admiral Shima and inform him of the situation was that I had no connection with him and was not under his command."

[2] Appendix M.III, Signal 1535.

[3] *Endorsements to U.S.S.* " *Pennsylvania's* " *Action Report*, M.02353/45, p. 29.

[4] *U.S.S.* " *Portland* ", *Action Report*, M.02343/45, p. 4, and Cincpac, *Report*, p. 84.

[5] *See* Appendix E.

[6] ComBatLine *Action Report*, M.0512/45, p. 10, and Cincpac, *Report*, p. 85.

[7] Sunrise was at 0627.

[8] *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*. Photographic Section, pp. 78, Va, b, c. The *Denver* (ibid, p. 78–20) says she saw four sinking ships in addition to one which the Left Flank Force sank. She thought the latter was a light cruiser, but it was probably a destroyer.

The *Mogami* was in a bad way. She had come unscathed through the American destroyer attacks, but had been badly hit later by gunfire. About 0410 the *Shigure*, retiring down the Strait at 30 knots, sighted her on a southerly course, on fire and apparently moving very slowly. The Fifth Fleet was now coming up the Strait towards the smoke screen which, extending across the Strait from east to west concealed the Allied ships. As the heavy ships of the Fifth Fleet turned to retire after firing torpedoes, the heavy cruiser *Nachi*, Vice-Admiral Shima's flagship, collided with the *Mogami*, which was not under control and was moving so slowly (about eight knots) that it was thought she was stopped.

A destroyer—believed to be the *Akebono*—was detailed to escort her and she apparently reached a position in the Mindanao Sea, to the southward of Kamigin Island ; but at 0900 that day she was hit by a bomb in the second of two air attacks directed at the surviving ships of the Japanese Southern Force. Damage to the ship was very severe and it was decided to abandon her, and she sank about an hour later.

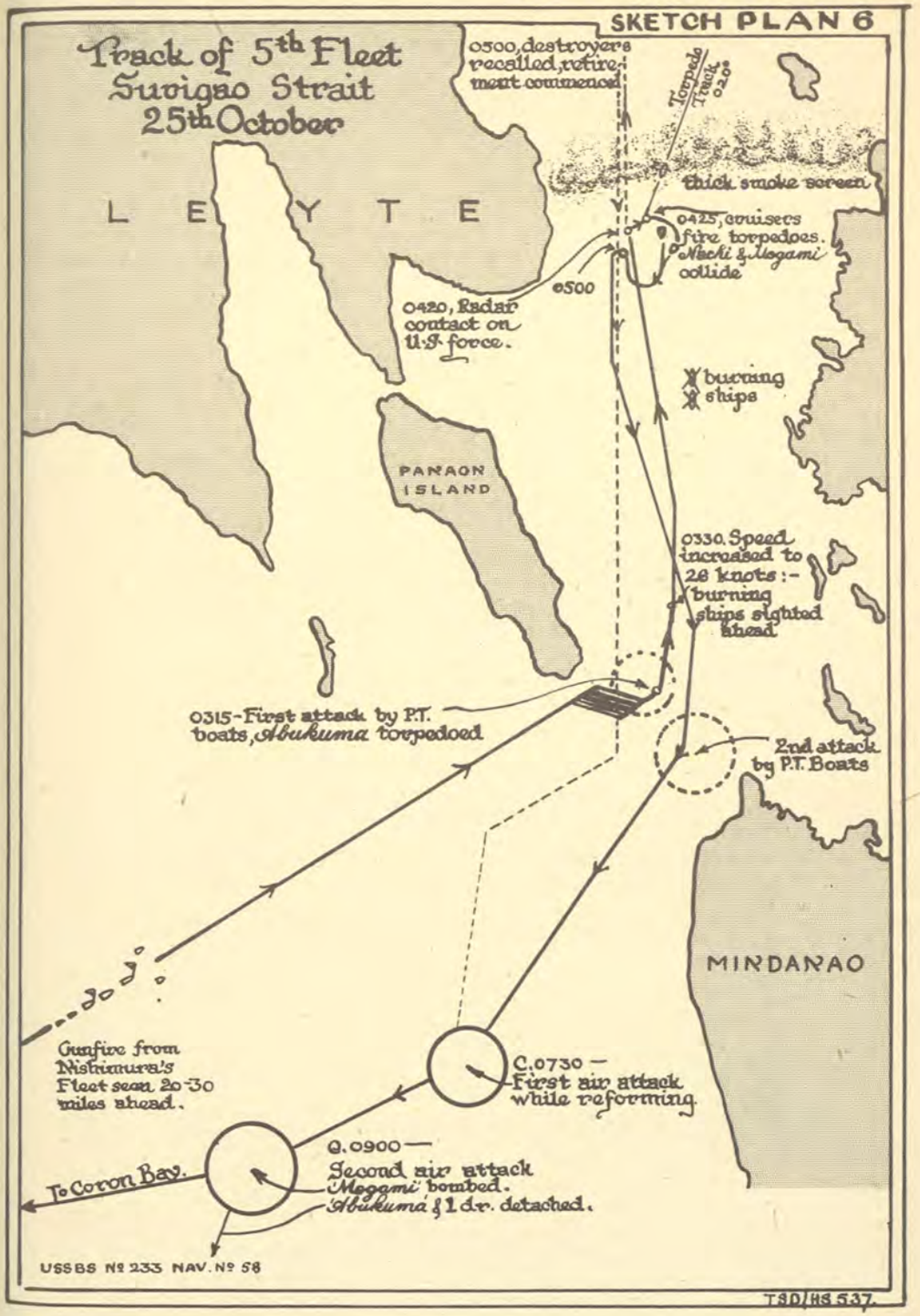
38. The Japanese Fifth Fleet. Sinking of the "Abukuma," 26th October (Plan 6)

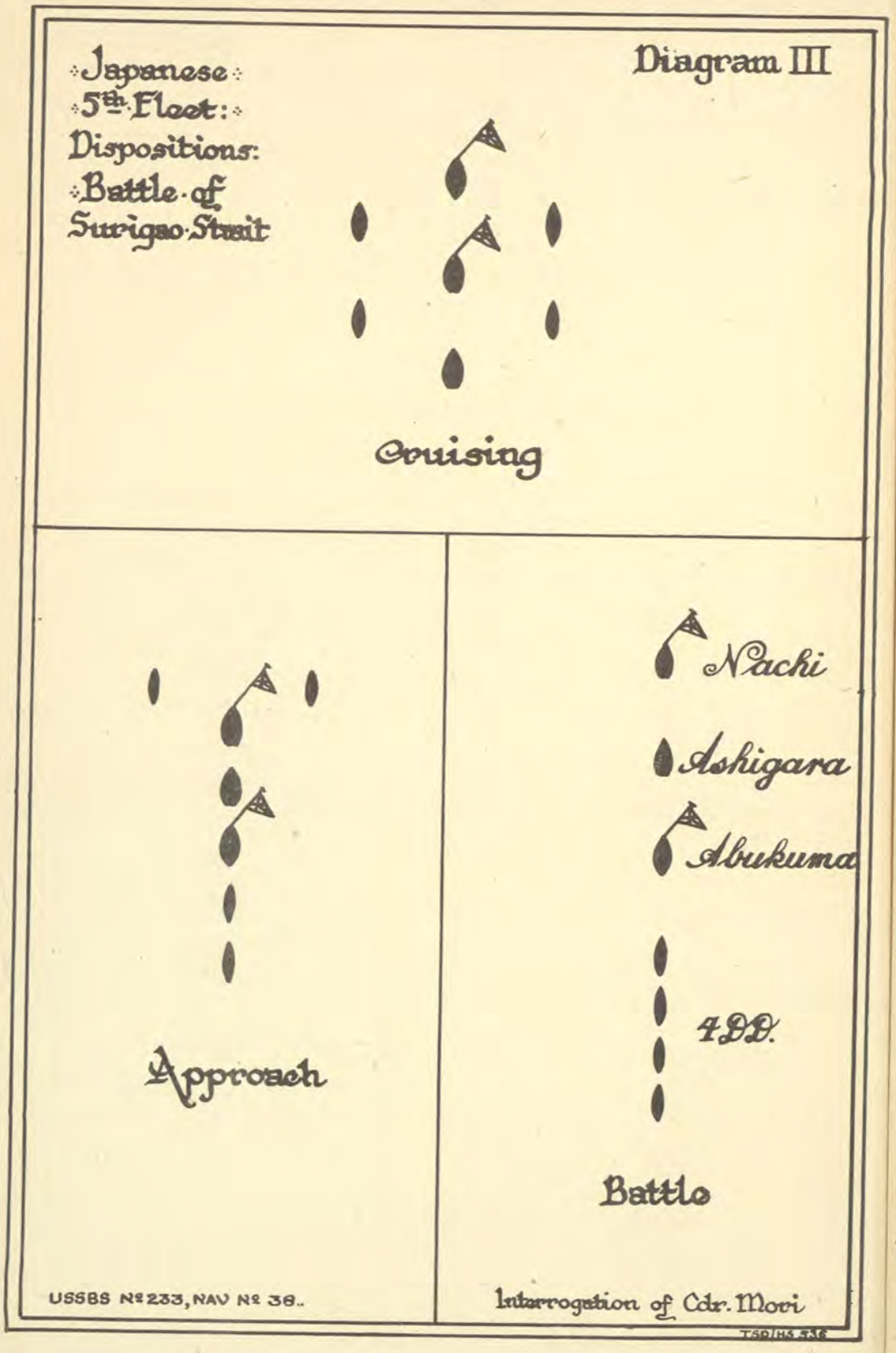
Whilst these important events were occurring, Vice-Admiral Shima, commanding the Fifth Fleet, had been doing his best to carry out his mission, which apparently was to attack the invasion forces in Leyte Gulf during the confusion which it was hoped would result from the attacks by Kurita's and Nishimura's forces. His orders appear to have been vague, and he was neither responsible to Vice-Admirable Kurita, nor was Vice-Admiral Nishimura—his junior in the service—answerable to him although both his force and Nishimura's were due to arrive at the same place at approximately the same time and on identical missions. On his way south from Bako to Koron, when north-west of Lingayen he had sent an aircraft to Manila to get information of the movements of Kurita's and Nishimura's forces, but before its return he received information of Vice-Admiral Kurita's fleet by radio.[1]

Vice-Admiral Shima received no further instructions after this radio message. He did, however, learn of the delay to the Centre Force caused by the fast carrier air attacks on the 24th, and consequently, whilst passing through the Sulu Sea he advanced his time of arrival at the objective by one hour in order to give more effective support to Nishimura. Later, he heard that Kurita had reversed his course about 1600, in face of the continuing air attacks ; and Vice-Admiral Shima accordingly again advanced his time and increased speed to 22 knots, in order to make his entry at 0300 on the 25th in support of Nishimura.[2] Faster than this he could not proceed on account of shortage of fuel. The fleet passed through the Sulu Sea and Mindanao Sea without any air attack being made on it. At midnight on the 24th–25th it bore 320° from Kamigin Island, and was thus about 30 miles astern of Nishimura's force.

The gun flashes of Nishimura's ships repelling torpedo boat attacks were seen about 0100, and from the interception of inter-torpedo boat telephone communications it was judged that the main Allied force was waiting off Panaon Island ; the Japanese had already received information as the result of air search on the 23rd, that torpedo boats were stationed at the entrance to Leyte Gulf.[3] The Fifth Fleet proceeded however, without being attacked

[1] "From somewhere to the south." (Interrogation of Commander Mori, Torpedo Officer on the staff of Vice-Admiral Shima, on which this section mainly relies.)
[2] Appendix M.IV, 250150.
[3] Interrogation of Commander Mori.


SKETCH PLAN 6
Track of 5th Fleet Surigao Strait 25th October
0500, destroyers recalled, retirement commenced
Torpedo Track 020°
thick smoke screen
LEYTE
0425, cruisers fire torpedoes. Nachi & Mogami collide
0500
0420, Radar contact on U.S. force.
burning ships
PANAON ISLAND
0330. Speed increased to 28 knots :- burning ships sighted ahead
0315-First attack by P.T. boats, Abukuma torpedoed
2nd attack by P.T. Boats
MINDANAO
Gunfire from Nishimura's Fleet seen 20-30 miles ahead.
C. 0730 — First air attack while reforming
Q. 0900 — Second air attack Mogami bombed. Abukuma & 1 dr. detached.
To Coron Bay.
USSBS Nº 233 NAV. Nº 58
T&D/HS 537.



until 0300. The tide was running north, and the ships were set too close to Panaon Island and had to alter course to the eastward. When the original course was resumed, battle disposition was assumed with the fleet in column, the destroyers being stationed astern. (*See* diagram III.) a.m. 25th Oct.

At 0300 this manœuvre had just been completed, and the fleet had changed to a northerly course for the run up the Surigao Strait, when an attack was received from the M.T.Bs. stationed off the south-east tip of Panaon Island. The light cruiser *Abukuma*, third ship in the line, was hit on the port side by a torpedo which reduced her speed to about ten knots, and killed 30 men. Leaving her behind without escort, the fleet increased speed to 26 knots and continued on their course of 010° under frequent torpedo boat attacks from Panaon Island, though without suffering any further damage.

At 0330, shortly after altering course to 000°, burning ships were sighted ahead. They were apparently taken for two Japanese battleships, and it was not until the fleet returned to Manila, that it was known they were the battleship *Yamashiro* and three destroyers. Disregarding them, Vice-Admiral Shima pressed on. The rain had stopped, but visibility was poor and the Admiral did not know exactly where he was. A dense smoke screen lay ahead, the Japanese radar was not working effectively for search, and no American ships could be detected, though it was judged that they were behind the smoke, attacking Nishimura's forces.

At length, at 0420 the *Nachi's* radar picked up a group of American ships ; and though the indications were indefinite, it was decided to concentrate a torpedo attack on them. At 0425, just as they came in sight of another burning ship (the *Mogami*), the cruisers swung to starboard and fired their torpedoes. As the flagship, *Nachi*, turned away after delivering her attack, she collided with the *Mogami* on a converging course of about 10°.

This put an end to the attack. The *Nachi* could make no more than 20 knots. The destroyers, who had been ordered to deliver their attack after the cruisers, continued north at high speed until they could see Hibuson Island ; but they could not see any American ships and they fired no torpedoes ; and at about 0500 the Admiral recalled them and gave the order to retire. Off the north tip of Mindanao, about an hour later, the fleet was again attacked by torpedo boats which were successfully repelled with machine and A.A. guns.

Meanwhile, despite torpedo damage, the *Abukuma* was still heading north following, though at reduced speed, the original instructions to attack. She was ordered to accompany the retreating fleet, and a destroyer was assigned to her, and also one to the *Mogami*, for escort. Whilst the Admiral was assembling his ships, about 0730, an air attack was received. The attack was not severe, but at 0900 in a second air attack about 25 miles south of Limasawa Island, the *Mogami* received the bomb hit from which she sank. The *Nachi* and *Ashigara* continued westward with two destroyers, ordering the *Abukuma* to proceed to Butuan Bay, Mindanao, to effect repairs ; an order which was later changed to Dapitan Bay (8° 44′ N., 123° 23′ E.) as the unsuitability of Butuan Bay was realised. However, a further air attack later damaged her so badly that she sank.[1] The crews of both the *Abukuma* and *Mogami* were taken off by the escorting destroyers, both of which made good their escape to Koron Bay.

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[1] Commander Mori stated in interrogation that the attack which sank the *Abukuma* occurred later on 25th, but no details are known. Fleet Admiral E. I. King, *Final Official Report* states that the *Abukuma* was sunk on 26th October off Negros I. by B.24s. and fleet units. The Naval Analysis Division, United States Strategic Bombing Survey state that carrier aircraft sank the *Mogami* and Army aircraft the *Abukuma*.

39. Task Group 77.2, Prepares for Action Off Samar

a.m. 25th Oct. Scarcely had Rear-Admiral Oldendorf's Task Group completed the sinking of the last of the Japanese destroyers, than he received orders from Vice-Admiral Kinkaid to send immediately one division of battleships, one division of cruisers and about half the destroyers in his group to the help of Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague, who had just reported that his escort carrier Task Unit, 77.4.3, was in action with the Japanese Second Fleet east of Samar. Commander Task Group 77.2 at once ordered his ships back to Leyte Gulf where he formed a force consisting of the strongest of his three battleship divisions, the Second, comprising the *Tennessee, California* and *Pennsylvania* ; his own Fourth Cruiser Division—the *Louisville, Minneapolis* and *Portland,* reinforced by the *Shropshire* and nine destroyers. With the cruisers and destroyers deep in the southern part of the Surigao Strait, it took time to assemble the ships, which almost without exception were exceedingly short of ammunition and fuel. The light cruiser *Denver,* for example, which could fire her complete outfit of 1,200 rounds of 6-in. in 15 minutes had no more than 113 AP. projectiles—less than ten rounds per gun—remaining after the action ; whilst the destroyers had expended almost all their torpedoes and there were no replacements ashore or in the supply ships at Leyte. In the event however, the Japanese Second Fleet broke off the engagement before the force could be made ready, and it remained at Leyte Gulf.

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CHAPTER VII

THE BATTLE OFF SAMAR, 25th OCTOBER

(See Plans 7 and 8)

40. Duties and Responsibilities of the Escort Carrier Force

Vice-Admiral Kurita with the Japanese Second Fleet had pursued his way to San Bernardino Strait undeterred by his losses during the day-long air attacks of the 24th by the Third Fleet fast carriers, and indeed, he had come through well considering his total lack of air cover. a.m. 25th Oct.

His presence in the Sibuyan Sea on the 24th and possible approach to the San Bernardino Strait were known to the escort carriers of the Seventh Fleet operating under Rear-Admiral T. L. Sprague east of Samar in support of the landings on Leyte. These forces, which formed Task Group 77.4, belonged to the Pacific Fleet and had been temporarily transferred to the Seventh Fleet. They consisted of 18 escort carriers organized in three groups of six each with screen of seven or eight destroyers or destroyer escorts.[1]

In the northernmost station east of Samar was Task Unit 77.4.3 under Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague,[2] consisting of the escort carriers *Fanshaw Bay* (flagship), *St. Lo, Kalinin Bay, White Plains, Kitkun Bay* (Rear-Admiral Ofstie) ; *Gambier Bay,* destroyers *Hoel, Johnston, Heerman,* and destroyer escorts *S. B. Roberts, Dennis, Butler* and *Raymond.* At daylight, some of their aircraft were already in the air carrying out the primary mission of the Task Unit to provide direct air support for the landing operations of the First Cavalry Division and the 24th Infantry Division on Northern Leyte. In addition, the Unit was responsible for :—

(*a*) Providing Combat Air Patrol for the northern transport and objective areas.

(*b*) Providing a part of the Anti-submarine Patrol for the transport area.

(*c*) Providing their own Combat Air and Anti-submarine Patrols for the local defence of their own ships against submarine and air attacks.[3]

Direct contact with units of the Japanese fleet was not expected.[4]

In view of the possible approach of enemy forces to San Bernardino Strait Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague, Commander Task Unit 77.4.3, who was in the northernmost position, on the night of 24th–25th October had been enjoined to be ready to load torpedoes on short notice and to be prepared to attack enemy forces if directed.[5] But he had been given no responsibility for covering the

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[1] *See* Appendix E.

[2] The track chart in *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22,* p. 78–27, shows him in approximately 11° 46′ N., 126° 11′ E., at 0645/25. *" Gambier Bay " Action Report,* M.0304/45, p. 6 gives her position at 0500 and courses maintained until 0645, which place her at that time about 50 miles to the north-eastward of the position given on the track chart. All *Gambier Bay's* records were, however, lost with the ship and her report was compiled from memory. Cincpac, *Report,* p. 90 says T.U. 77.4.3 was 60 miles north-north-east of Suluan Island.

[3] M.0304/45, *U.S.S. " Gambier Bay " Action Report, 20th/25th October, 1944, Philippines Area,* p. 6.

[4] *" St. Lo " Action Report,* M.0509/45, p. 4.

[5] *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22,* p. 78–36, *Fanshaw Bay's* Report and M.0304/45 *" Gambier Bay " Action Report,* p. 6, para. 3.

a.m. 25th Oct. exit of San Bernardino Strait, and he assumed that his northern flank could not be exposed without ample warning.[1] His immediate superior, Rear-Admiral T. L. Sprague, had not been sent the Commander Third Fleet's signal 2024 stating that he was going north, nor the *Independence* aircraft sighting report of 2030 showing the Japanese Centre Force at a time and position which indicated that it had picked up considerable speed and intended to sortie through San Bernardino Strait ;[2] nor, so far as is known, were these messages relayed to him by Vice-Admiral Kinkaid ;[3] consequently he made no changes in the night dispositions of his escort carriers, the northernmost group of which was close to the edge of the circle which the Centre Force could reach by dawn. Vice-Admiral Kinkaid, for his part, assumed that the Third Fleet was in position to intercept and destroy any enemy who might force the San Bernardino Strait.[4]

In his official report, the Commander Seventh Fleet states :[5]

> " At 1512 on 24th October, Commander Third Fleet issued a despatch, which was intercepted by Commander Seventh Fleet, to all Third Fleet subordinate commands, stating that a force of battleships, cruisers, and destroyers was being formed as Task Force 34, presumably to engage the Japanese Central Force. Commander Task Force 38 reported at 1852 that planes had sighted another Japanese Force, hereafter referred to as the Northern Force, in position 18° 25′ N., 125° 28′ E., course 270°, speed 15. At 2024 Commander Third Fleet advised Commander Seventh Fleet that the enemy Centre Force (in position 12° 45′ N., 122° 40′ E. at 1925) was moving on a course of 120°, speed 12, in Sibuyan Sea towards the north-west tip of Masbate Island (in the direction of San Bernardino Strait). He further stated that he was ' proceeding north with three groups to attack the enemy carrier force (Northern Force) at dawn.'[6] As the fast battleships had been removed from the carrier groups and organized as Task Force 34, it was assumed that Task Force 34 was still guarding San Bernardino Strait."

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[1] *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–15. Comment ascribed to " C.T.G. 74.4, (was also C.T.U. 74.4.3) " [?C.T.U. 77.4.1 intended]. *St. Lo* says that it was further believed that the Japanese Centre Force had been too badly damaged to be capable of an offensive sortie from San Bernardino Strait (*St. Lo Action Report, Battle of Samar*, M.0509/45, p. 4). *" Gambier Bay " Action Report*, M.0304/45, p. 31, considers that the divided chains of command for the Naval forces in and near the Philippines for this operation may have been responsible for the situation which arose.

[2] This is Cincpac's interpretation of the 2030 sighting report ; this sighting report is referred to in Section 23 of this narrative.

[3] Cincpac *Report*, pp. 89–90.

[4] *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–25, Brief summary by Commander Task Force 77. *Gambier Bay* (M.0304/45, p. 6) also states : " Responsibility for the interception of any major surface attacks upon any of the Seventh Fleet engaged in the support of the landings was understood to be assigned to the Third Fleet."

[5] Cincpac *Report*, p. 68.

[6] Between these two signals Admiral Halsey made another, at 2005 to C.-in-C., U.S. Pacific Fleet, which was sent to Vice-Admiral Kinkaid, though the time of receipt by Commander Seventh Fleet is not known. The signal summarized the air attacks on the Japanese Centre and Southern Forces, reported the new contact with the Northern Force, and stated : " C.T.G. 38.3 has scuttled *Princeton* and is closing 38.2 and 38.4 which are now concentrated off entrance to San Bernardino Strait. Night attack by enemy possible. More later." Cincpac *Report*, p. 124, considers that when Vice-Admiral Kinkaid learnt that Admiral Halsey was proceeding north (signal 2024) but failed to draw the conclusion that there were no Third Fleet battleships covering him, he also failed to draw the conclusion that there were no longer any Third Fleet aircraft tracking the enemy Centre Force.

Unfortunately, this assumption was due to a misinterpretation of Commander Third Fleet's despatch timed 1512 quoted above, for Task Force 34 was not actually formed until 0240 on 25th.[1] a.m. 25th Oct.

During the early hours of 25th it was borne in upon Vice-Admiral Kinkaid that there was no definite statement in Admiral Halsey's despatches that Task Force 34 was still guarding the San Bernardino Strait. The whole of his forces were now committed to the battle now in progress in the Surigao Strait. He decided to check definitely the position of Task Force 34. At 0312 on 25th he made a signal to Admiral Halsey asking if he was guarding the Strait. The latter apparently did not receive the signal until 0648,[2] more than 2½ hours later ; and when the reply was received it was too late ;[3] the escort carriers were already fighting for their lives against the enemy which had fallen upon them from San Bernardino.

The movements of the Japanese Centre Force had remained unreported since 2145 on 24th,[4] in the first place through the mischance of communication trouble, and secondly because, with the withdrawal of the *Independence* night search aircraft when this ship proceeded north with the Third Fleet at midnight 24th/25th, there remained in the southern area no aircraft equipped for night shadowing. There were as yet no air forces of any kind based on the captured Leyte airfields. The long-range searches by aircraft based on Morotai, which covered this general area, were daylight searches only, and hence of no help in the existing situation. The aircraft of the escort carriers of Task Force 77.4 were also being used for daylight missions only. Even had Vice-Admiral Kinkaid made a request for night searches from Morotai, it is a question whether the available aircraft could have responded adequately.[5] Actually, the Commander Seventh Fleet made no such request, since the Third Fleet was assumed to be looking after the night searching.

Admiral Halsey had relayed to Vice-Admiral Kinkaid the *Independence* aircraft report of sighting the Centre Force at 2030 between Burias and Masbate Islands ;[6] but the sighting report of 2145, received by the Commander Third Fleet at 2320, giving the enemy position as 12° 45′ N., 123° 22′ E., the furthest to the eastward yet reported, was not retransmitted to the Commander Seventh

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[1] This despatch is not forthcoming, but it appears that it was designated as a Battle Plan, and prescribed the composition of the force which (in the words of the despatch) " will be formed as T.F. 34 under Vice-Admiral Lee, commanding the battle line." It did not state when the force was to be formed or where it was to engage. (Cincpac, *Report*, p. 115).

[2] Ibid.

[3] *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, Summary by C.T.F. 77, p. 78–25. Commander Seventh Fleet states in his Report (quoted in Cincpac, *Report*, p. 115) " A reply . . . . was not sent until 0704."

[4] *See* Section 23.

[5] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 125.

[6] *See* Section 23. Cincpac, *Report*, p. 70, states that this contact when plotted, showed the enemy to be making good about 24 or 25 knots, radically greater than his previous rate of advance, and indicated that he was determined to get through San Bernardino Strait. This would appear to mean that Cincpac considered that Vice-Admiral Kinkaid should have been prepared for such an eventuality. Cincpac, *Report*, p. 122 gives the following speeds for the Centre Force : 204745 to 241925—10 or 11 knots, 241925 to 242125—over 22 knots, 242125 to 250630—about 24 knots. T.S.D. (H/S) estimate is as follows :—240800 to 242030—nearly 12 knots, 242030 to 250700—about 19 knots. Since the *Nagato* could do no more than 24 knots, the *Haruna* 25, and the damaged *Yamato* 26 it seems improbable that the Japanese Centre Force made good as much as 24 or 25 knots as estimated by Cincpac.

a.m. 25th Oct.

Fleet as far as is known.[1] Vice-Admiral Kinkaid apparently also knew nothing of the amplifying report of the last contact, made by the *Independence's* reconnaissance aircraft at about 0010 on 25th, to the effect that the battleships, one of which was believed to be of the *Yamato* class, were in column on a north-easterly course between Burias and Tikao Islands when sighted, also that the course could be south-east as well as the north-east previously reported. The result was, that neither Vice-Admiral Kinkaid nor Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague was aware that the enemy main body, with its strength but little impaired by the day long air attacks of 24th, had passed through San Bernardino Strait during the night of 24th/25th and turned southward to attack the armada off the Leyte beaches, between whom and this powerful Japanese Fleet there stood no more than the 18 escort carriers of the Seventh Fleet, caught at a disadvantage, and totally unprepared for such an emergency, though " this task unit (even though unsupported) could have raised havoc with the enemy if it had had but an hour's warning of impending contact," stated Captain W. V. R. Vieweg of the *Gambier Bay*.[2]

It is true that the escort carriers of Task Group 77.4 had considerable air power, nearly 450 aircraft in fact, though they would have found it difficult, with their slow speed, to evade Vice-Admiral Kurita's fast ships, even had they been moved further from the daylight circle of the latter. To have withdrawn them inside Leyte Gulf for protection, would have hampered them in working aircraft and rendered them more vulnerable to land-based air attack. In any case, their aircraft could not operate until daylight, and to have stationed adequate radar pickets to cover the necessary arc and distance in order to give warning of the approach of the Japanese Centre Force, would have seriously diminished Rear-Admiral Olendorf's available torpedo power in the more certain prospective action against the enemy Southern Force. Apart from this consideration, it would have been undesirable to employ all or part of the Seventh Fleet against the Japanese Centre Force for Kurita's battleships with their advantage in speed, could have fought at long range, outmanœuvring the old American battleships until their limited stock of ammunition was exhausted.

41. The Centre Force Transits San Bernardino Strait, Night, 24th/25th October[3]

Vice-Admiral Kurita was six hours behind schedule. It had been arranged that his force should come through San Bernardino Strait at 1800 on the 24th, but owing to the delay caused by the Third Fleet air attacks in the Sibuyan Sea he was not at the exit until midnight. The distance to Leyte Gulf was about 180 miles, so that unless he abandoned all consideration of fuel economy he was bound to be behind time. Vice-Admiral Nishimura who was up to time, reported his estimated time of arrival at Leyte Gulf after midnight 24th/25th, whilst proceeding into Surigao Strait.[4] However, Vice-Admiral Kurita sent no order to him to delay his advance, nor did Admiral Toyoda order any change in the plan.[5] It was a clear night, and the Second Fleet

[1] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 70.

[2] " *Gambier Bay* ", *Action Report*, M.0304/45, p. 31.

[3] Based on Vice-Admiral Kurita's Interrogation (N.I.D. 10056/45).

[4] Vice-Admiral Kurita stated that he thought Vice-Admiral Nishimura reported he had been attacked by torpedo boats soon after midnight 24th/25th and this was followed by one or more reports giving his E.T.A. at the target and saying he would be delayed. (N.I.D. 10056/45, pp. 47–11, 24.)

[5] " I certainly remember of no other messages." (*Ibid.*)

navigated the narrow places in the channel in column at 20 knots.[1] The ships were at action stations as they issued from the Straits, expecting to have to fight their way out against Admiral Halsey's Task Force. They found no enemy, and consequently turned south according to plan. a.m. 25th Oct.

42. Contact with the Enemy, 0645 25th October

In both the fast and escort carrier task forces of the American fleet, the practice of conducting dawn and dusk short range air searches had gradually fallen into disuse, greater reliance being placed upon shore-based searches and intelligence from other sources to provide vital strategic information, and radar to prevent tactical surprise.[2]

On this particular morning, the Commander Seventh Fleet had ordered Task Group 77.4 to conduct a dawn search for enemy ships between 340° and 30° for 135 miles from Suluan Island. This would have disclosed the Japanese Centre Force. But although sunrise was at 0627 and the search aircraft had been launched by the *Ommaney Bay* (Task Unit 77.4.2) they had not departed by 0645.[3] The Leyte anti-submarine patrol of two torpedo aircraft, and the local combat air patrols and anti-submarine patrols had all been launched by Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's Task Unit (77.4.3) ; and to the southward, Task Units 77.4.2 and 77.4.1 had launched similar patrols and missions.

The six escort carriers of Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's Task Unit 77.4.3 received their first warning of the enemy's approach a quarter of an hour after sunrise, about 0645 on 25th October, in various ways, all more or less simultaneous. Some intercepted voice transmissions in the Japanese language over the inter-fighter director net ; some received reports of surface contact on the S.G. radar, the bearing and distance from the flagship, the *Fanshaw Bay*, being 292° 18½ miles, other ships picking up the contact at 47,000 yards. Anti-aircraft fire was also heard and seen : this came from the Japanese ships firing at aircraft of the escort carriers' anti-submarine patrol, which sighted and reported large groups of ships about 15 to 30 miles west to north-west of the carriers.[4]

At this time, the northern carrier group, having completed the launching of scheduled air patrols about an hour earlier, was in approximately 11° 50′ N., 126° 10′ E. about 40 miles east of Samar, proceeding with the carriers in circular formation, diameter 5,000 yards, within a screen of destroyers and destroyer escorts 3,500 yards farther out, on a northerly course.[5] This formation (*see* Diagram IV) the carriers maintained as far as possible throughout the action.[6] The enemy, reported as four battleships, six to eight cruisers, and eight to 12 destroyers, was sighted astern a few minutes later, almost within gun range of the carrier group whose masts they sighted shortly after Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's aircraft made contact. Surprise was never more complete.

[1] There were certain Japanese minefields in the Strait, but from the wording of Vice-Admiral Kurita's reply to the question regarding American mines it is not clear whether he disregarded the possibility or did not consider it likely that there were any.

[2] " *Gambier Bay* " *Action Report*, M.0304/45, p. 30.

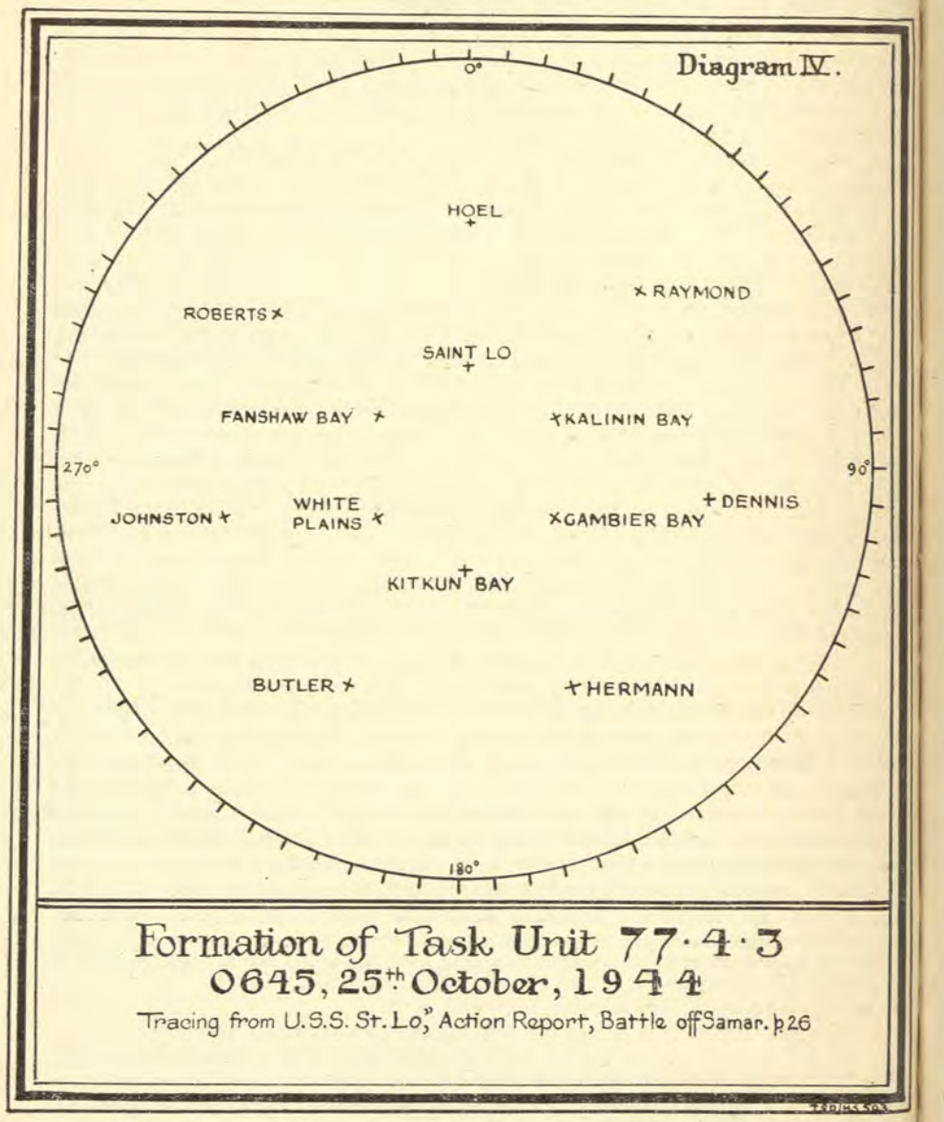
[3] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 9, where the only known mention of this search is made.

[4] C.T.F. 77 (who was not present at the action) gives the time of these reports as 0631, but the escort carriers give time about 0645.

[5] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 90 says " The escort aircraft carriers on a 2,000 yard circle, and the screen on a 6,000 yard circle."

[6] Both " *St. Lo* " *Action Report*, M.0509/45, p. 18 and " *Gambier Bay* " *Action Report*, p. 3, state that they conformed throughout to the manœuvring signals of C.T.U. 77.4.3, apart from deviations to avoid enemy salvos. Eventually, however, the carriers undoubtedly became strung out. Both the above ships lost all their records of the battle.

a.m. 25th Oct. Directly the enemy were reported, Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague ordered all available aircraft to be launched to attack, after which they were to proceed to the partially completed Tacloban airfield on Leyte, to rearm and refuel. He increased to full speed and turned his carriers to a course 90° (0655) which was sufficiently close to the light north-easterly wind to permit launching[1]



[1] *" St. Lo " Action Report*, M.0509/45, p. 4, says the wind was of a force of about 10 knots from the east. *" Gambier Bay " Action Report*, M.0304/45, p. 4, says about 10 knots from east-north-east. The exact direction of the wind was stated by C.T.U. 77.4.2 to be from 049°, strength seven knots at 0935 (Report, *Secret Information Bulletin No. 22*, p. 78–31).

whilst taking his ships directly away from the enemy, but their maximum speed of 17 to 19 knots[1] being much below that of the Japanese, the range at first closed rapidly.[2] a.m. 25th Oct.

At 0705 the Rear-Admiral broadcast a contact report and asked for assistance.[3] The news was received on board the Seventh Fleet flagship about 0724, and was the first intimation Vice-Admiral Kinkaid had that the enemy Centre Force had succeeded in passing through the San Bernardino Strait.[4] In addition to ordering all available surface forces to concentrate at the eastern entrance to Leyte Gulf, preparatory to moving to the support of the escort carriers, the Commander Seventh Fleet sent an urgent call for assistance to Admiral Halsey. All aircraft were recalled from support missions and sent to attack the Japanese Centre Force ; and the remaining two groups of escort carriers, Task Units 77.4.1 and 77.4.2,[5] moved northward to support their colleagues.[6]

43. Disposition of the Japanese Fleet

The composition of the enemy force which passed through the San Bernardino Strait was as follows :—

Battleships	..	*Yamato, Nagato, Haruna, Kongo.*
Heavy cruisers	..	*Chokai, Haguro, Suzuya, Chikuma, Kumano, Tone.*
Light cruisers	..	*Noshiro, Yahagi.*
Eleven destroyers.		

At the time of sighting, the Japanese Second Fleet was changing into circular formation after coming through the San Bernardino Strait in night formation.[7] The light forces had dropped back. In the centre were the 1st and 3rd Battle Squadrons. The former consisted only of Vice-Admiral Kurita's flagship, the *Yamato*, with the *Nagato*, for the *Musashi* had been sunk on the previous day. The 3rd Squadron also comprised two battleships, the *Kongo* (flagship) and the *Haruna*. On the right flank was the heavy cruiser *Chokai* from the 4th Cruiser Squadron, together with the *Haguro*, the only remaining ship of the 5th Cruiser Squadron since the *Myoko* was damaged on 24th. The 7th Cruiser Squadron on the left flank comprised the four heavy cruisers *Kumano* (flagship), *Suzuya*, *Chikuma* and *Tone*. On the starboard bow was the 2nd Destroyer Flotilla and on the port bow the 10th Flotilla. Owing to the necessity of assigning destroyers to escort the *Takao*, damaged on 23rd, and

[1] *" Gambier Bay " Action Report*, M.0304/45, p. 4, states that her maximum speed was slightly in excess of 19 knots.

[2] The range was short enough for Vice-Admiral Kurita to be able to notice that the flight decks of the American carriers were full of aircraft as they turned to starboard on sighting the Second Fleet (N.I.D. 10056/45, p. 47–11).

[3] Report of C.T.U. 77.4. (Rear-Admiral Ofstie, *U.S.S. " Kitkun Bay ") Secret Information Bulletin No. 22*, p. 78–26.

[4] C.T.F. 77, Report, *Secret Information Bulletin No. 22*, p. 78–25.

[5] For composition of these two units *see* Appendix E.

[6] Summary by C.T.F. 77, *Secret Information Bulletin No. 22*, p. 78–25. This statement, however, needs a slight qualification (*see* Section 53).

[7] N.I.D. 10086/45, *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. B.S., No. 170), Nav. No. 41*, p. 170–4, states : " It was before we had completed the execution of order to change from night formation to ring formation, that the sighting occurred. The order to change the formation had been given at 0630."

a.m. 25th Oct.

the *Myoko* next day the 2nd Flotilla now contained only six or eight destroyers and the 10th Flotilla four. The distance between columns was about 4,300 yards.[1]

On sighting the masts of the American ships Vice-Admiral Kurita altered course from 200° to 110° in order to come up wind of the carriers and prevent launching and recovering their aircraft. All his ships increased to their individual full speeds. The slowest ship was the battleship *Nagato*, who could do no better than 24 knots. The *Haruna's* top speed was 25, and the *Yamato* which was down by the bow as the result of bombing, could only make 26 knots. The course of the Japanese fleet tended to curve to the southward until the ships reached the windward position, when they altered course and bore down on the carriers.

44. The Enemy Open Fire, 0655. (Plan 8)

The enemy opened fire almost immediately after being sighted, the *Yamato* at 35,000 yards, the *Haruna* at 33,700 yards and the *Kongo* at 26,250 yards, whilst the cruisers are reported to have opened at the extreme range of 29,200 yards.[2] In the American formation at this time the *S. B. Roberts*, *White Plains* and *Fanshaw Bay* were the most exposed ships, and it was apparently at them that the enemy at first directed his fire. The carriers continued on their easterly course at full speed, arming and launching all available aircraft whilst under fire. The aircraft attacked at once, in small formations, causing the Japanese ships to scatter for better defence.[3]

Meanwhile, the range was closing. At 0701 Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague ordered the destroyers and escort vessels to lay a smoke screen astern of the carriers; the latter also made smoke. There was a 10-knot wind, with squalls and heavy rain showers which reduced visibility and, as the Americans believed, possibly contributed to prevent the enemy from appreciating the weakness of the force opposed to him—certainly he could not distinguish whether he was opposed by fast carriers or escort carriers, and his reconnaissance aircraft reports were inadequate.[4] Instead of ploughing straight through the carriers, each ship of which mounted only a single 5-in. gun, he wasted time in encirclement.[5]

During the launching of aircraft, the range from the *St. Lo*, which now that the enemy heavy cruisers were drawing ahead was probably their nearest target, soon fell to 22,000 yards. Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague had been awaiting a favourable opportunity to turn towards the Seventh Fleet battleships at Leyte.[6] His chance came at 0720, in a rain squall which hid his ships; and a bold alteration of course from 080° to 170° opened the range a little.

[1] According to the American reports the enemy were in three groups: the heavy cruisers to the northward; battleships in the centre directly astern of the American formation; and their light forces to the southward.

[2] "*Fanshaw Bay's*" *Report, Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–36, but *Kalinin Bay*, op. cit., p. 78–87, gives the opening range of the enemy heavy cruisers as 20,000 yards. The Japanese plan does not show the cruisers opening fire.

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 47–12.

[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 47–13.

[5] Vice-Admiral Kurita states, however, that this was not due to caution. He did not expect more than one battleship, if any, to be with the carriers and he was unable to close the range any faster. (*Op. cit.*, pp. 47–10, 47–14.)

[6] "*Fanshaw Bay's*" *Report, Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, pp. 78–36, 78–104.

45. Enemy Attempt at Envelopment

On this course, the relative wind was such that the smoke lay in an East-West line.[1] In an apparent attempt to avoid the effects of the smoke which troubled him seriously, the enemy advanced first one and then a second and third of his heavy cruisers up the port quarter of the American formation, and under continuous pressure from these ships the carriers were slowly forced round to starboard, so that for a short time, between 0800 and 0815, they were on south-westerly course, and apart from one short period from 0815 to 0830 they were not again able to maintain a southerly course for more than a very few minutes. With all escort carriers making heavy black smoke and with escorts making both funnel and chemical smoke on the starboard quarter of the formation, the vision of both forces was largely obscured. This fact, with the failure of the Japanese to close the range more rapidly, was largely responsible for saving the Task Unit from complete destruction.[2] a.m. 25th Oct.

At 0738 the range of the nearest enemy cruiser was no more than 14,000 yards from the rearmost carrier, the *St. Lo*; and one heavy cruiser accompanied, it was thought, by a large destroyer moved up on the port beam of the formation at an initial range of 16,000 yards which later closed to 12,000 yards, and fired very deliberately full broadsides at the ships in the Task Unit.[3] As the course was altered slowly to the westward, most of the firing was from the enemy cruisers, infrequent salvos being contributed by the battleships astern and by destroyers advancing on the starboard quarter of the Task Unit.

Throughout this period the bombing and torpedo aircraft of the Task Unit had been attacking the enemy desperately, for the most part with general-purpose bombs of little use against armour,[4] whilst additional fighters were catapulted to aid by "strafing." The original aircraft complement of the escort carriers had been increased for the Philippine operations from 21 to some 30.[5] Some had been launched on scheduled flights before the sighting of the enemy, but each carrier was able to launch perhaps 15 to 20 during the first half-hour or so of the battle,[6] others being brought up from the hangar decks and launched or jettisoned during the action. At 0745 the *Gambier Bay* launched a torpedo aircraft with full load of fuel and carrying a torpedo with only 15–17 knots of wind over the deck, though the catapult tables required 22 knots of apparent wind. The Japanese ships manœuvred individually to avoid the attacks, which led to the gradual breaking up of their formation. The plan of operations on which they were working made no provision for protective air cover by land-based aircraft.[7]

[1] C.T.U. 77.4.32 (*Kitkun Bay*) Report, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–36.

[2] Report of C.T.U. 77.4.32, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–26.

[3] "*St. Lo*" *Action Report*, M.0509/45, p. 18, says: "Flashes from all six [sic] of the cruiser's turrets were observed as salvos were fired." None of the Japanese cruisers had six turrets, but the *Chokai*, *Chikuma* and *Tone*, all of whom were now on the port side of the escort carriers might give the appearance of having six turrets when firing on the beam their main armament (8—7·87-in. twins) and four of their sided eight H.A. guns, simultaneously.

[4] "*Gambier Bay*" *Action Report*, M.0304/45, pp. 6, 26, states that owing to the nature of the escort carriers' duties her aircraft armament consisted mainly of G.P. bombs. A.P. bombs had been landed and replaced by G.P., and only 24 S.A.P. bombs and the normal allowance of nine aircraft torpedoes were carried. There was some difference of opinion in the fleets as to the relative effects of S.A.P., A.P. and G.P. bombs against armoured ships (Cf. *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, pp. 78–49 and 78–56), but none as to the relative superiority of torpedoes.

[5] "*Gambier Bay*" *Action Report*, M.0304/45, p. 25, C.B. 01815 (U) October, 1944, gives 30–42 aircraft as the *normal* complement of this class.

[6] *Gambier Bay* launched 17 by 0710, *Kalinin Bay* 20 by 0725, and *St. Lo* 19 by about 0730.

[7] N.I.D. 10056/45, *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. B.S. No. 47), Nav. No. 9*, p. 47–14.

a.m. 25th Oct. Up to now, no ship had been hit although salvos fell amongst the carriers. The Japanese ships opened fire visually when they could see anything and afterwards tried to work in radar control, but with their unsuitable installations the battleships were only intermittently able to find the range of the escort carriers screened as they were by the smoke which the Americans used with great efficiency. No targets were assigned, the ships being left to choose their own, and they continued to fire as long as they had a target.[1] The enemy rate of fire was slow, over a minute between salvos, and full use was made by individual American ships of manœuvres to avoid being hit. The carriers had been ordered at 0740 to open fire with their single 5-in. guns as soon as the enemy were within range (17,000 yards) ; the *Gambier Bay* and *St. Lo* opened fire at once and the other carriers as feasible, but although they reported some hits on the cruisers these had no appreciable effect on the enemy. During this period, the *White Plains* and the *Fanshaw Bay* were under concentrated fire, but the Japanese had not yet succeeded in making a single hit.

46. American Destroyers Launch Torpedo Attacks, 0740.[2] The "Kumano" put out of action

At 0740 Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague ordered the screen commander in the destroyer *Hoel* to launch a torpedo attack.[3] Low visibility rendered co-ordinated attacks impossible. The destroyer *Johnston* apparently attacked first, firing a full salvo at a heavy cruiser. She received heavy damage but continued to fire her guns at ranges down to 5,000 yards. At 1010, after the crew had abandoned her, she sank.[4]

The *Hoel* launched a half salvo of torpedoes at a battleship at 9,000 yards. Almost immediately she was hit and her port engine and steering engine were put out of action ; but steering by hand she continued to fire her guns at the battleships and cruisers which were now on either side of her. A few minutes later, she fired another half salvo of torpedoes and reports hits on a heavy cruiser at 6,000 yards. Riddled by some 40 hits by 5-in., 8-in. and 14-in. shells, she went down at 0855 whilst trying to repair battle damage.

About 0743, the destroyer escort *Raymond*, whose position in the formation whilst steaming on its present course was on the port quarter, made an independent attack[5] on an enemy cruiser coming up from astern. She was straddled by the fire of the latter during the run in, but remained unhit, and at 0756, when the range was down to 10,000 yards she fired a spread of three torpedoes, apparently from a position almost dead ahead, and then rejoined her formation at 24 knots.

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[1] N.I.D. 10056/45, *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. B.S. No. 47), Nav. No. 9*, p. 47–14.

[2] The descriptions of these attacks, except that of the *Raymond*, are based on Cincpac, *Report*.

[3] *Fanshaw Bay* (flagship), Report, *Secret Information Bulletin, No, 22*, p. 78–36. But "*St. Lo*", *Action Report*, M.0509/45, p. 19, says the screen was divided, one group ordered to make a torpedo attack, and one to continue smoke screen. *Raymond* says : "At 0743 C.T.U. 77.4.3 ordered the destroyer escorts to make torpedo attack on enemy cruiser" (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–37). Cincpac, *Report*, p. 92, states that at the order of Commander Task Unit 77.4.3, the vessels of the screen undertook a series of torpedo attacks. No time is given but the *Johnston* is said to have made her attack at 0720 and the *Hoel* at 0727.

[4] Of the original survivors when the *Johnston* went down, 45 died in the water. Cf. footnote 3, p. 75.

[5] "Destroyer escorts have never, I believe, been trained in formation torpedo attack procedure." (Comment by destroyer escort *John C. Butler*, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–124).

The third destroyer, the *Heerman* was more fortunate. No results were observed from her first seven torpedoes, fired at a heavy cruiser at 0754 ; but at 0800 she fired three at a battleship of the *Kongo* class and reported one hit. She was subsequently in a gun action with two heavy cruisers, but escaped with comparatively light damage. a.m. 25th Oct.

The destroyer escort *Samuel B. Roberts* approached to within 4,000 yards under cover of the smoke of the destroyers, before delivering her torpedo attack ; one hit on a heavy cruiser at about 0800 is reported. She escaped out of this with her life, but between 0851 and 0907 she was hit 20 times, and sank at 1005 after her crew had abandoned her.

The destroyer escort *Dennis* fired three torpedoes at 8,000 yards with results which were not seen.

The seventh vessel of the screen, the destroyer escort *John C. Butler*, made no torpedo attack.

Altogether three hits were reported and it was no doubt in one of these attacks that the Japanese cruiser *Kumano* received the torpedo hit which reduced her speed to 16 knots. Vice-Admiral Shiraishi shifted his flag to the *Suzuya*, who for a time stood by her. Later the *Kumano* abandoned the operation and returned to Brunei.[1]

In addition to the material damage to the *Kumano* the destroyer attacks caused dispersion of the Japanese ships through turning away and gained valuable time for the escort carriers, though the enemy quickly resumed the attack.

47. First Hit obtained by the Enemy, 0750

In spite of the undiminished intensity of the enemy's fire, it was not until the action had been in progress for an hour that the first hit on any of the carriers was recorded. Early in the engagement the cruisers *Haguro* and *Chokai*, enabled no doubt to cut a corner when the Japanese battleships turned to a southerly course soon after 0800, moved across to the port side of the formation and took the lead, in rough line ahead, from the *Tone* and *Chikuma*, the only two cruisers left in the Seventh Squadron when the *Kumano* and *Suzuya* fell out. It was perhaps during this manœuvre that shortly after 0800 the leading cruiser to port was seen to commence a turn away, only, however, to continue the turn through 360° and take station astern of her colleague. As the Japanese cruisers continued to gain they shifted target to the leading ships, and from this time on, the *Kitkun Bay* and *Fanshaw Bay* were under heavy fire and were repeatedly straddled. The *Kitkun Bay* received no damage, but at 0750 the *Fanshaw Bay*, Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's flagship, was hit on the bow by an 8-in. shell, damaging her catapult. Only two other 8-in. shell hits were received, neither of them serious. The failure of the Japanese ships to inflict greater damage is remarkable. At one period, about 0844, a unit of the enemy force consisting of a light cruiser and eight destroyers closed to a range of 6,900 yards from the *St. Lo*, but the latter remained unhit. The slow rate of fire, more than a minute between salvos, and poor spotting

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[1] Vice-Admiral Kurita stated that the torpedo was fired by a destroyer, in which case the time, 0730, given on the Japanese plan, appears too early. "After the fast torpedoes had passed and missed a slow speed one got it [*Kumano*] near the stern." (N.I.D. 10056/45, *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. B.S. No. 47), Nav. No. 9*, p. 47–13.)

a.m. 25th Oct.

enabled the ship under fire to manœuvre to avoid the next salvo.[1] The general employment of salvos rather than broadsides and of A.P. shells, some of which apparently failed to detonate within the ships saved the latter from more serious damage.[2]

48. The Enemy's First Destroyer Attack, 0754[3]

At 0754 one of the vessels of the screen reported torpedoes approaching the carriers from the starboard quarter. These were considered to have been fired at very long range by the group of enemy destroyers (Tenth Flotilla) to starboard during the time the American destroyers made their attack.[4] The timely warning enabled them to be avoided.

Two minutes later, three U.S. destroyers of the *Fletcher* class were sighted on the horizon to southward. They responded correctly to the *Gambier Bay's* searchlight challenge and acknowledged a signal informing them that the carriers were under attack. After first standing to the eastward towards the enemy they turned and disappeared to the southward without taking part in the battle.[5]

About 0805 there was a submarine alarm, culminating in a supposed sighting. No torpedoes were seen and it is believed there was no submarine present,[6] although about 0830 a torpedo aircraft from T.U. 77·4·2 reported attacking a submarine 20 miles north-west of T.U. 77·4·3.

49. Sinking of the " Gambier Bay ", 0810 to 0911

During all this time, the ships had been turning gradually to a south-westerly course, the effect of which, together with the differences of speed and the evasive manœuvres practised was to string out the disposition with the *White Plains*, the *Kitkun Bay* and the *Fanshaw Bay* in the lead, the *St. Lo* only 10,000 yards from the enemy forces astern at 0810, and the *Kalinin Bay* and the *Gambier Bay* on the exposed windward flank, clear of the protection of the smoke which drifted to starboard and aft (*i.e.*, to the north-westward). As a result, the latter three carriers became the principal targets. The *Kalinin Bay* was hit three or four times from 0750 onwards, once apparently, by a battleship, for fragments of a heavy shell were found on board, but was not seriously

[1] The Japanese used coloured dyes for spotting. *Gambier Bay* says (M.0304/45, p. 28) that the Japanese apparently spotted in increments of about 100 yards. *St. Lo* (M.0509/45, p. 19) says that in most instances they over corrected. Both ships agree that spotting was poor. Some ships state that the small spread of salvos was a contributory factor to the failure of the Japanese to obtain more hits. C.T.G. 77.4. comments (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–97) : " Competent observers have stated and photographic evidence appears to verify the fact that the pattern size was in the neighbourhood of 200 to 300 yards. This pattern size proved, after a trial of 2½ hours, to be entirely too small to ensure hits."

[2] " His AP went cleanly through our ships. There is no record of a single detonation." (Comment by C.T.U. 77.4., *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–97). However, this does not agree with " *Gambier Bay* " *Action Report*, M.0304/45, Part IV, Battle Damage, from which it appears that out of 15 hits of which details are recorded, 10 of the shells exploded within the ship or on impact, two failed to explode and the result of three is not stated. One of the latter was evidently blind.

[3] Vice-Admiral Kurita in his interrogation (N.I.D. 10056/45) mentions only one destroyer attack, viz. that at 0925, and the Japanese plan shows only this attack.

[4] *Raymond*, Report, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–37.

[5] M.0304/45. *U.S.S. " Gambier Bay ", Action Report, 20th/25th October, 1944. Philippines area*, pp. 7, 11. It is thought that they may have been three destroyers from the Seventh Fleet sent according to schedule to relieve the three with T.U. 77.4.3.

[6] *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 2*, p. 78–29.

damaged. Not so, however, the *Gambier Bay*. Between her and the enemy heavy cruisers no screen remained to intervene, and she had been for some time under the 8-in.[1] shell fire of three heavy cruisers and occasional salvos from the enemy main body. For a long while she avoided one salvo after another by alterations of course ; but at 0810 the ship received her first hit. From now onwards she was hit almost continuously in the flight deck and spaces above water. Few of these shells reached any vital part of the ship until at about 0820 a hit below water in the forward engine room caused the abandonment of the latter seven minutes later and the ship slowed to 11 knots and fell astern.

a.m. 25th Oct.

This was the beginning of the end for the *Gambier Bay*. By 0850 the ship, listing and on fire, was dead in the water, with three enemy cruisers firing at her at point blank ranges, and her Commanding Officer, Capt. W. V. R. Vieweg, gave the order to abandon ship. At 0911 she sank in 11° 31′ N., 126° 12′ E., with an enemy cruiser firing into her at a range of less than 2,000 yards to the end. About 750 men left the ship, taking with them many seriously wounded. After some 40 hours in the sea without fresh water[2] most of them were saved by craft despatched from Leyte Gulf.[3] About 133 officers and men lost their lives.

50. Enemy Destroyers Again Approach, 0830

About 0830 the *Kalinin Bay*, one of the rearmost ships of the formation, sighted five destroyers on the starboard quarter, approaching head-on in column. They were at first thought to be friendly units coming to assist, until they opened fire at a range of approximately 14,500 yards. At the time, the enemy cruisers attacking from the port quarter were obscured from view by the smoke screen laid by the American escorts, and the *Kalinin Bay* shifted the fire of her single 5-in. gun to the destroyers, which when the range was down to 10,500 yards, were definitely recognized as of the *Terutsuki* class.[4]

The enemy cruisers continued their attack. The *Kalinin Bay*, being between two fires was unable to use evasive courses and was hit by the Japanese cruisers several times at this period. Since, however, the five destroyers were closing the range rapidly she continued to direct her fire on them and never again during the action shifted back to the cruisers. Presently some of the American escorts closed the latter[5] and apparently caused them to turn away somewhat, for the range from the *Kalinin Bay* began to open.

The firing of the Japanese destroyers appears to have been wild, and no hits are recorded. The *Kalinin Bay* made a direct hit on one of them about 0930, causing the vessel to be immediately enveloped in white smoke ; and about the same time they made some radical manœuvres and commenced to withdraw, firing as they went. It was probably at this juncture that they fired the salvo of torpedoes which was seen a few minutes later.[6]

[1] Actually, 7·87-in.

[2] " Not a single water breaker on any raft retained potable fresh water notwithstanding the fact that all breakers had been refilled with fresh water only two days previously. The spigots were either knocked loose when the rafts were dropped to the water or accidentally kicked loose by personnel in the raft." (" *Gambier Bay* ", *Action Report*, M.0304/45 p. 31.)

[3] There seems to have been some hitch in the rescue of the survivors of the escort aircraft carriers and escorts sunk in the battle. " They were ' buzzed ' by friendly planes, but there were no efforts at air-sea rescue, and they had to wait until craft were sent out from Leyte to pick them up." (Cincpac, *Report*, p. 96.)

[4] " *St. Lo* ", *Action Report*, M.0509/45, p. 7, believed the group consisted of a light cruiser and eight destroyers.

[5] *See* next section.

[6] *See* Section 54.

51. Desperate Expedients Adopted

a.m. 25th Oct.

By 0826 the two cruisers to port had forged clear of the drift of smoke from the carriers, and Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague ordered two destroyer escorts to cross from the starboard to the port side of the formation and lay their smoke on the port bow of the task unit. The destroyers and destroyer escorts had been rendering and continued to render valuable and devoted service by making smoke and distracting the enemy by their gunfire,[1] and this appears to have been one of the principal reasons why the Japanese ships were unable to close to decisive range despite their utmost efforts. At 0902 the destroyer escort *Dennis* reported a hit below the waterline and her main battery out of action. The destroyer escort *Raymond*, which had survived the torpedo attack at 0740 was ordered at 0828 to intercept an enemy cruiser, later identified by the *Raymond* as of the *Nachi* class, approaching on the port quarter.[2] The *Raymond* had no smoke or torpedoes left, but she closed the range from 12,600 to 5,700 yards, on which the cruiser, which during the approach, had shifted target from the carriers to the destroyer escort, straddling but failing to hit her, turned away, together with a battleship. About 0900, however, the enemy cruisers were threatening to turn the escort carriers to the northward, towards the main Japanese disposition, and the desperate expedient was adopted of ordering the T.B.M. aircraft who had expended their bombs to make dummy torpedo runs on the enemy. The effectiveness of the ruse is not known.

52. Task Unit 77·4·2 Enters the Battle, 0855

At last, however, welcome help was near for the hard-pressed escort carriers. At 0705, when Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague broadcast his enemy report and asked for assistance Rear-Admiral T. L. Sprague (T.U. 77·4·1) with the six ships of the Central Station Carrier Group[3] was about 120 miles to the southward of the battle approaching Leyte on a north-westerly course[4] and he sent off all available aircraft to support Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague. At 0740, without warning, he was attacked by enemy aircraft when in approximately 09° 45′ N., 126° 35′ E., and the escort carrier *Santee* was hit by a suicider. At 0753 the same ship was hit amidships and further damaged by a torpedo fired by a Japanese submarine which was not located ;[5] and six minutes later another escort carrier, the *Suwannee*, was hit and damaged by a suicide aircraft, many

[1] The *Hoel* fired approximately 600 rounds of common and A.A. projectiles before being sunk. (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–57.)

[2] *Raymond*, Report, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–37. In view of the coincidence of time and circumstance it seems possible there may be some connection between this order and the order to the destroyer escorts at 0826, to lay smoke on the port bow.

[3] T.U. 77.4.1. *Sangamon* (F), *Suwannee, Chenango, Santee, Saganaw Bay, Petrof Bay* and screen.

[4] This paragraph is based on Cincpac, *Report* and the small scale plan in *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–28. No report from Rear-Admiral T. L. Sprague or any of his ships is available. Cincpac, *Report*, p. 90, says that T.U. 77.4.1 was 90 miles south-east of Suluan Island " early on the morning of 25th October."

[5] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 96. No mention is made of this torpedoing in the list of casualties suffered by T.G. 77.4, ibid, p. 100. At 2240/25 U.S.S. *Coolbaugh* reported that she had sunk a submarine about 50 miles east of the position where *Santee* was hit (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–28), but the sinking was not confirmed. *Japanese Submarine Operations* (BIOS/JAP/PR/1280) states that submarines were used in concentration to the east of Leyte during the battle, and probably sank a transport on 24th October and an aircraft carrier and a destroyer next day.

casualties being caused.[1] Both carriers were soon back in operating condition, the *Santee* by 0900 and the *Suwannee* an hour and a half later. a.m. 25th Oct.

Two more air attacks were made on the Task Unit, both unsuccessful. At 1154 three enemy aircraft made a low local attack which was beaten off by gunfire, and another attack was driven off at 1220, when an attempted suicide dive on the *Sandee* failed. Shortly before this latter attack Rear-Admiral T. L. Sprague quitted the area and steered to join the surviving ships of Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's Task Unit 77·4·3.[2]

Nearly 100 miles to the northward of Task Unit 77.4.1, and consequently in a better position to render help, was the third escort carrier group, Task Unit 77.4.2, six carriers under Rear-Admiral F. B. Stump.[3] The latter did not receive the news that Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague was under heavy fire until more than an hour later, at 0814, for although one of his aircraft at 0643 had apparently sighted and reported the Japanese Fleet the message did not reach C.T.U. 77.4.2.[4] At the time, Task Unit 77.4.2 was about 20 to 25 miles to the south-eastward of the enemy,[5] proceeding on a course 160° at 17 knots, except when headed to the north-eastward for launching aircraft. Placing his three destroyers, the *Haggard* (Captain Reynolds, ComDesDiv 94), *Hailey* and *Franks* about three miles astern of the carriers on a bearing towards the enemy, to intercept any attempt to attack by light forces, and his five destroyer escorts ahead for screening, Rear-Admiral Stump prepared to launch aircraft strikes. At 0817 shells, estimated to be 8-in., were falling short of the three destroyers. These were fired by the *Haruna*. The range, 35,300 yards by Japanese estimation, was closing 1,000 yards every ten minutes, and about 0841 the destroyers were straddled. They were unhit, but were ordered to close the formation.

At 0833 T.U. 77.4.2 altered course to 037° to launch a strike[6] and land six of Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's aircraft who could not be taken on board their own carrier. This occupied until 0844, when course was altered to 140°. As Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's aircraft completed their attacks they landed if and wherever they could, either at the partially serviceable Tacloban airfield on Leyte or on the escort carriers of Rear-Admiral Stump's task unit. As his aircraft became exhausted, Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's attacks on the Japanese Second Fleet tapered off, until by 0830 they had practically ceased. In the belief that there would be a heavy air attack later, perhaps in an hour's

[1] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 95 ; but on p. 100 it is stated that the ship was hit by two suicide aircraft, though no other mention of this second attack has been found.

[2] The *Sangamon* (T.U. 77.4.1) was also slightly damaged by suicide air attack in the battle. (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, pp. 78–8, 78–118.)

[3] *Natoma Bay* (F), *Manila Bay, Marcus I., Kadashan Bay, Savo I., Ommaney Bay* and screen.

[4] Report of C.T.U. 77.4.2, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–30. " *Gambier Bay* ", *Action Report*, M.0304/45, p. 9 says : " 0643 intercepted an almost unintelligible excited VHF transmission from an ASP plane from T.U. 77.4.2, to its base to the effect that the Japanese Fleet was sighted 30 miles from base. (T.U. 77.4.2 was operating 10 miles south of our position at the time.)"

[5] Rear-Admiral Stump's report, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–30, gives his 0800 position as " 11° 13′ N., 126° 49′ E. 11° 13·5′ N., 126° 32·5′ E." This double set of co-ordinates is not understood, unless it refers to D.R. and observed positions. The plan of the action (op. cit., p. 78–28), which is on a very small scale, shows him about 45 miles south-east of the enemy. His report states that he was 20 to 25 miles from the enemy, which seems more probable since his destroyers were almost within range of the Japanese and under fire 17 mins. later. It is not known why the southern escort carrier group was to northward of the central group.

[6] Strike No. 2. It is not stated at what time Strike No. 1 was launched.

a.m. 25th Oct. time, Vice-Admiral Kurita at 0911 ordered his ships to close the formation. Rear-Admiral Stump's air attack struck him as he was passing the sinking *Gambier Bay*[1] and destroyers and had just hoisted the signal for ring formation.

53. Sinking of the "Chikuma" and "Chokai"

Strike No. 1 began its attack at 0855. Part of the flight attacked two heavy cruisers and a light cruiser which had T.U. 77.4.3. under close fire. The remainder, supported by eight fighter and 16 torpedo aircraft, the latter loaded with torpedoes, of Strike No. 2 attacked two heavy cruisers and one battleship directly astern of their own Task Unit. The main weight of the attack struck the enemy between 0910 and 0930 when the nearest enemy ship, visible on the horizon, had closed Rear-Admiral Stump's force to 16 miles and shell fire was coming closer to his escort carriers.[2] The strikes reported considerable success, two torpedo hits being made on a heavy cruiser of the *Tone* class and one torpedo hit on a *Kongo* class battleship.[3]

There can be little doubt that these strikes caused the damage to the cruisers *Chikuma* and *Chokai*, on account of which they had later to be sunk by the Japanese. At 0907 the *Chikuma* reported that she had been hit by one torpedo and was unable to navigate; later she reported being able to make 18 knots with one propeller, but was unable to steer. The precise manner in which the *Chokai* was damaged is uncertain, apart from a bomb hit on her forward aircraft; but three minutes after the *Chikuma* was hit, she too was out of action. The destroyer *Fujinami* took off the crew of the *Chokai*, whilst the *Nowake* was sent to assist the *Chikuma* and was sunk later in the day by carrier air attack, though the Japanese heard no more of her.[4]

54. The Enemy fires torpedoes and breaks off the Action, 0925

There now occurred something which, to the escort carriers, fighting with desperation but with small expectation of survival[5] must have seemed little short of a miracle. At 0925 the *Kitkun Bay*, who by reason of her position in the formation was now only 10,500 yards from the group of enemy cruisers to port,[6] saw the latter turn 16 points to port in succession[7] and retire to the northward. When steady on the opposite course they resumed firing at the *St. Lo* until their reverse course took them out of range.

At this time the three enemy groups bore from the *Fanshaw Bay* respectively 021° distant 21,000 yards, 152° distant 18,700 yards, and 088° distant 19,500 yards. All three enemy groups retired about the same time, and at 0952 they faded from the flagship's radar screen.

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[1] About 0855 according to the Japanese plan of the battle.

[2] A salvo fell about 1,700 yards astern.

[3] The report of C.T.U. 77.4.2, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–31, paras. 3 and 4 is inconsistent. In para. 3 he says Strike one made one torpedo hit on each of the two heavy cruisers and Strike two made two torpedo hits on one of the heavy cruisers. In para. 4 he says "two torpedo hits on a heavy cruiser (*Tone* class) and one torpedo hit on a battleship (*Kongo*) were scored in these important first two strikes."

[4] *See* Section 68, footnote.

[5] Report of C.T.U. 77.4.32 (*Kitkun Bay*) *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–26, states: "Until the moment when the enemy broke off and retired to the north there appeared only one possible outcome of the encounter—complete annihilation."

[6] Her action Report, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–29. "*St. Lo*", *Action Report*, M.0509/45, p. 19, calls them a cruiser (using six turrets) and a destroyer.

[7] "Counter-march in column to the left."

a.m. 25th Oct. As the enemy broke off the action a dozen or more torpedoes were seen approaching, evidently fired at long range, for they were running very shallow and broaching to, and passed harmlessly astern, while the rearmost ships, the *St. Lo* and the *Kalinin Bay*, had no difficulty in combing the waters. Both ships fired at the torpedoes with 40-mm. and 20-mm. guns without success though the explosion of a 5-in. shell, fired by the *Kalinin Bay* ahead of a torpedo astern, apparently caused it to alter course radically to port. One of the *St. Lo's* aircraft also strafed them and apparently caused at least one to explode. There seems little doubt that the Japanese destroyers of the 10th Flotilla on the starboard quarter fired most of the salvo of torpedoes, despite their unfavourable position, but at least one torpedo approached the *St. Lo* from the port beam, indicating that the 2nd Destroyer Flotilla may also have launched an attack before retiring.[1]

Vice-Admiral Kurita had now given up hope of overtaking Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's ships. He was even now uncertain of their type, whether fast carriers or escort carriers, for Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's fighter aircraft had prevented the *Yamato's* reconnaissance aircraft from obtaining any information; and he estimated their speed at about 30 knots. The evasive manœuvres necessary to avoid the ceaseless American destroyer and air attacks, and the effective use of smoke not only prevented his ships from overtaking but in the prevailing low visibility had actually caused him to lose sight of his quarry though his light forces were in touch.[2] He was drawing heavily on his fuel supply at these high speeds, and this he could not afford. About 0930 he recalled his cruisers, unaware that they were within 11,000 yards[3] of Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's escort carriers,[4] and set a course for Leyte Gulf to carry out the now badly overdue attack on the invasion forces.

55. Enemy Air Attack, 1050, "St. Lo" Sunk

By about 0940 all enemy gunfire had ceased and the retirement of all Japanese units was in progress. Task Unit 77.4.3 altered course to the southward for Leyte Gulf and for an hour the crews had a respite from attack, though enemy aircraft were about.

Battered though they were, Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's escort carriers lost no time in despatching their remaining aircraft to the attack. At 1000 the *St. Lo* and *Kitkun Bay* each launched a torpedo aircraft which had been loaded with torpedo during the battle and despatched them in company. Aircraft from carriers whose flight decks were out of commission were landed by the rest, and refuelling and re-arming commenced without delay.

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[1] *Kitkun Bay* (second ship in the line) states: "Heavy cruisers to port had obviously fired this torpedo salvo" (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–29). *Fanshaw Bay* (third ship in the line) merely states "Enemy launched torpedo attack from extreme range" (Op cit., p. 78–36). *Kalinin Bay* (rear ship) states that the torpedoes were fired by five *Terutsuki* class destroyers (op. cit., pp. 78–35 and 78–91). *St. Lo* believes they were fired by the group of destroyers on the starboard quarter (*Action Report*, M.0509/45, p. 7) but in addition to the many observed passing quite wide to starboard (Op. cit., p. 19) one of her torpedo aircraft reported to her a torpedo approaching from the port beam. The only torpedoes shown on the Japanese Plan as fired by their ships were by the 10th D.F. about 0905.

[2] N.I.D. 10079/45, *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. B.S. 149), Nav. No. 35*, p. 149–6.

[3] Ibid, "10 Km."

[4] "We had poor communication with our cruisers and couldn't see what they were doing." (*Interrogation* [of Commander Otani, Operations Officer on Staff of C.-in-C., Second Fleet], Nav. No. 41, *U.S.S. B.S. No. 170.*)

a.m. 25th Oct. At about 1050 an air attack developed on Task Unit 77.4.3, the first organised " Kamikaze " (suicide) attack of the war[1]. The attackers were land based. They came in below the effective altitude of the SK radar and climbed to the height necessary to launch their attacks when close enough to be able to ignore radar detection. Destroyer escorts on the starboard bow and beam opened up with A.A. fire as the enemy aircraft approached. The *Kitkun Bay* was hit first, but the aircraft merely dived through her catwalk and caused little damage. A second Japanese aircraft hit and damaged the *White Plains*. The *Kalinin Bay* hit one with her A.A. gunfire but failed to prevent it from crashing on board, where it caused fires which were, however, extinguished in a very few minutes. Another hit her on the port side,[2] and an attempt by a third resulted in its diving into the sea close aboard.

At about 1053 an enemy suicider crashed on the *St. Lo's* flight deck abreast the after funnel, some 15 ft. to port of the centre line. At the time the ship was loading and servicing aircraft and an unusual condition existed due to the necessity of preparing these urgently needed machines for further action.[3] The detonation of the enemy bomb caused an explosion which initiated a chain of events resulting in the self destruction of the vessel within the space of half an hour. In quick succession a number of explosions occurred, causing a great fire amidships, putting out of action the fire-fighting equipment and communications. In a very few minutes it was clear to Captain F. J. McKenna of the *St. Lo* that his ship could not be saved, and as soon as she had lost sufficient headway he gave the order to abandon her. At 1125 the ship sank in approximately 11° 12′ N., 126° 30′ E. About 112 officers and men lost their lives and about 338 were injured.[4]

What remained of Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's force, the *Fanshaw Bay*, *White Plains*, *Kalinin Bay* and *Kitkun Bay*, all damaged except the last,[5] retired south and south-east throughout the afternoon of 25th, recovering aircraft as practicable, and headed for an evening rendezvous some 75 miles east of Siargao Island which had been arranged with C.T.U. 77.4.1. They sailed next day for Manus with a borrowed screen.

In the desperate air attacks of this battle the escort carriers lost 35 aircraft.[6] Their total losses during the Battle for Leyte Gulf were approximately 105 aircraft,[7] over a fifth of their total complement. In all, they made 252 torpedo and 201 fighter sorties, dropping 83 torpedoes and 191 tons of bombs. Out of 301 enemy aircraft encountered between 24th and 26th October, 138 were destroyed.

[1] C.T.U. 77.4.2 criticises the attack for poor timing in locating the escort carriers (*Secret Intelligence Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–92). He states : " In addition to poor timing . . . a further error . . . was the poor selection of targets . . . instead of selecting a group of escort aircraft carriers already under fire of the Japanese Fleet, the Japanese flight leader should have attacked Task Unit 77.4.2 which was completely undamaged and was launching heavy air attacks against the Japanese Fleet."

[2] The resultant damage is not stated in the ship's report.

[3] M.0509/45, " *St. Lo*," *Action Report*, p. 23.

[4] Op cit., p. 22 states : " Four escort vessels were on hand to pick up survivors." It is not known who they were. The navigator, who was the last to leave the sinking ship before the Captain, carefully " placed his binoculars on a convenient hook " before taking to the sea.

[5] The losses and damage to ships of the force are given in Appendix G.

[6] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 94.

[7] Admiral King's *Second Report*, p. 72.

a.m. 25th Oct. The escort carriers and their screen lost 994 officers and men killed and missing.[1]

[1] Ships of Task Group 77.4 suffered the following casualties during the Battle off Samar :

	Ship	Killed	Wounded	Missing
Task Group 77.4.3				
Escort Carriers	*Fanshaw Bay*	4	4	12
	St. Lo	10	394	104
	White Plains	—	13	—
	Kalinin Bay	5	55	—
	Kitkun Bay	1	16	—
	Gambier Bay	23	160	97
Destroyers	*Hoel*	19	19	234
	Heerman	5	9	—
	Johnston	94	40	90
	Dennis	6	19	—
Destroyer Escort	*Samuel B. Roberts*	23	50	66
Task Group 77.4.1				
Escort Carriers	*Suwannee*	106	106	74
	Santee	21	29	—
Total all ship personnel		317	914	677

The figures are taken from *Operations in Pacific Ocean Areas, October, 1944*, but the addition shown in the totals is that of T.S.D./H.S.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BATTLE OFF CAPE ENGANO, 25th OCTOBER

(See Plans 9 and 10)

56. Contact with the Japanese Northern Force 0205, 25th October

Night 24th/25th Oct.

Whilst the Seventh Fleet escort carriers were fighting their gallant delaying action, the Covering Force—the Third Fleet, under Admiral Halsey—250 miles to the northward was attacking the Japanese carriers.

It had not been possible to keep contact with the enemy Northern Force throughout the night. About 0030 on 25th the night carrier *Independence* launched a 10 sector, 350 mile night search, one aircraft per sector, between bearings 320° and 010°.[1] Other searches to the northward were launched shortly after ; at 0100 between the same bearings by the *Lexington* and at 0135 two night fighters by the *Enterprise*.

About 0205 a radar contact was made, by one of the search aircraft in 16° 42′ N., 125° 36′ E. Three large and three small ships were reported steering 110° at 15 knots, with a second group of six large ships 26 miles to the northward of the first.[2] This put the closest enemy group almost due north (bearing 352°), at an estimated distance of 80 miles. Contact was soon lost. At 0300 engine trouble forced the night shadowing aircraft to return to base, the relief search aircraft had difficulties with radar equipment, and radar contact was never regained during darkness.[3] When last seen the mean course of the two enemy groups was about N.N.E.

It seems possible that the rearmost of these contacts may have referred to Rear-Admiral Matsuda's detached force in process of rejoining the main body, for the Japanese carrier force normally cruised as a single group (*see* Diagram V), and only separated into two groups, which kept within visual signalling distance of one another, when air attack was expected.

57. Task Force 34 formed 0240/0430, 25th October

At 0226 Vice-Admiral Mitscher recommended to the Commander Third Fleet that course should be changed to north, and that Task Force 34 should be formed, to provide for co-ordinated surface and air attack on the enemy. This was approved by Admiral Halsey, who at 0240 directed Vice-Admiral Mitscher to form the force in position 10 miles north of the fleet guide, Commander Task Force 38 retaining tactical command of the fleet until otherwise ordered. Course was changed to 080° and speed increased to 25 knots, the carriers reducing to 10 knots to allow the heavy surface striking force (Task Force 34) to get clear ahead, for it was possible that a surface battle might develop by 0430.[4]

Task Force 34 as constituted[5] comprised all the six battleships, two heavy cruisers, five light cruisers and 18 destroyers from Task Force 38, leaving in the latter the three groups of carriers with a total screen of 23 destroyers.

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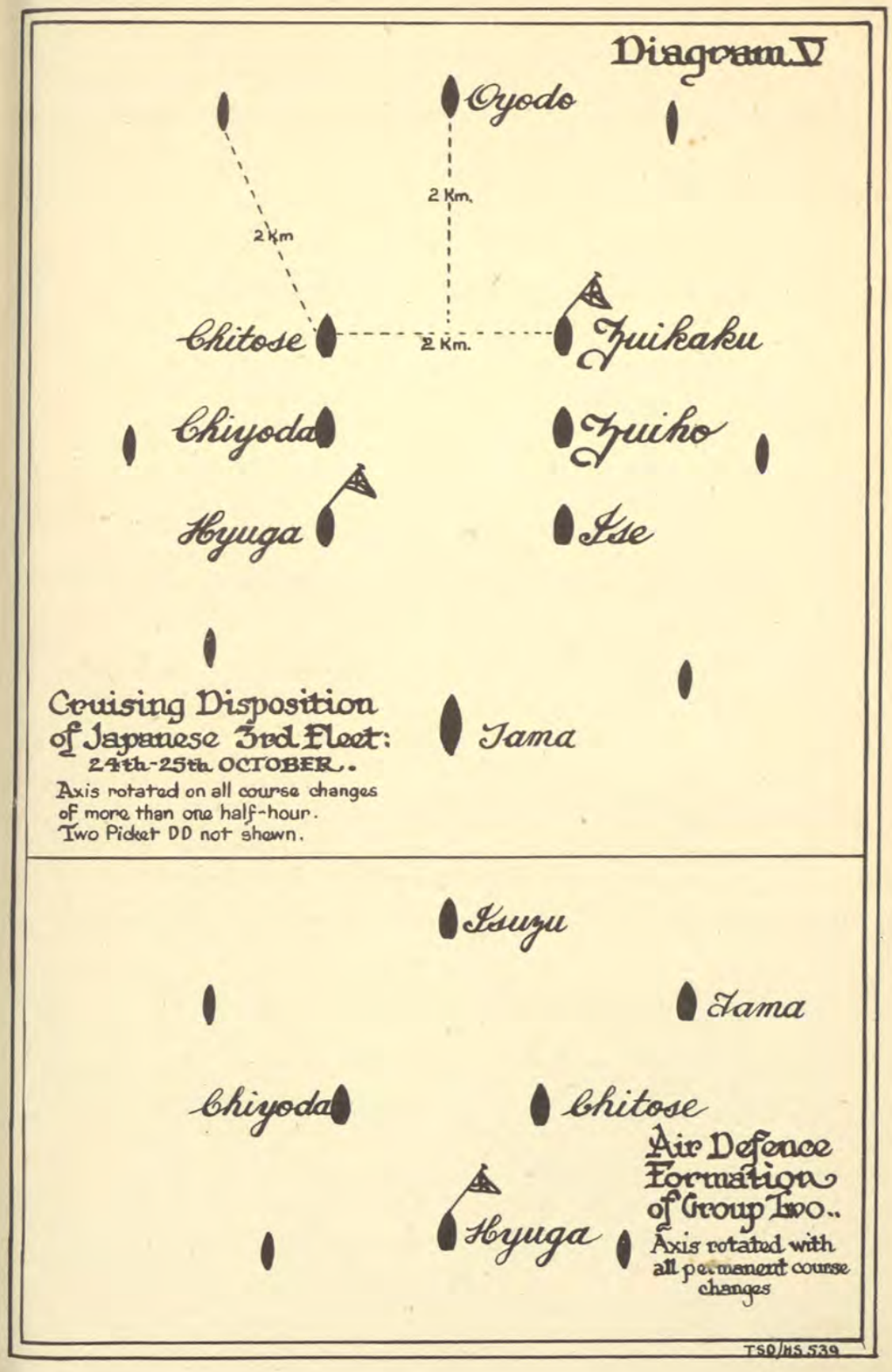
[1] M.01571/45 (*Lexington's* report, p. 3). C.T.F. 38's report is not forthcoming, but comments by him are in *Secret Intelligence Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–38, where the time of launch is as stated above. Cincpac, *Report*, p. 101 gives time of launch 0100.

[2] This is the enemy report given by Rear-Admiral Sherman in M.0237/45, C.T.G. 38.3, *Action Report*, p. 7, and it is confirmed generally by the other available reports, though no two of these are in exact agreement with one another.

[3] M.04755/45, *U.S.S. "Alabama" Action Report*, p. 2, says that search aircraft were in contact with the Japanese Northern Force throughout the night 24th/25th October. This is incorrect.

[4] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 107.

[5] *See* Appendix B.



Formation in the darkness of so large a disposition as this heavy surface striking force occupied a long time. It was two hours or more before all ships from the various task groups of Task Force 38 gained their proper station.[1] " Had contact with enemy surface forces been made during this period," writes Rear-Admiral C. T. Joy, Commander Cruiser Division 6, U.S.S. *Wichita*, " our forces would have been under a tremendous handicap ".[2] a.m. 25th Oct.

Course was set at 000°. By about 0430 Task Force 34 was formed up[3] ahead of the carrier groups in Cruising Disposition 4N under Vice-Admiral W. A. Lee, Jr., U.S.S. *Washington*. The six fast battleships were in three columns ; the cruisers stationed as left flank, centre, and right flank ; and the 20 destroyers formed an anti-submarine screen ahead. The disposition was altered from time to time,[4] but the course of the Task Force was only slightly modified throughout the morning. Speed was increased to 18 knots at 0724, 20 knots at 0801, and finally to 25 knots at 0835.[5]

58. Dawn Searches Sight the Enemy, 25th October

It was considered certain that whatever course the enemy might have steered since contact was lost at 0300 he would be within easy range of air attack at dawn, and the first deckload strike was armed in the early hours, ready to take off directly there was sufficient light.

The weather at daybreak was excellent—clear with only a few clouds on the horizon and a 16-knot wind from 050°. Launching of patrols, searches and strike groups commenced at 0555, and soon afterwards the search aircraft took departure from 16° 06′ N., 125° 55′ E. As there was no recent information of the enemy's position the initial strike groups were stationed 50 miles to the north to await target data and further instructions. So many aircraft were employed on patrols, searches and communication relays, that Admiral Sherman could only muster one well-balanced strike group amongst the three carriers of his Task Group, 38.3.

In sector 290°–300° the two *Terutsuki* class destroyers seen the previous afternoon[6] were again sighted, this time near Pamoctan Island. One was reported set afire by strafing. In sector 310°–320° a convoy of 14 ships, many of them transports, escorted by five destroyers was reported sighted in 19° 30′ N., 121° 30′ E., course 170°. The assigned search sectors did not extend

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[1] The force cruised in a circular disposition. At 0330 guide speed was slowed to 15 knots to facilitate forming up, and at 0410 T.F. 38 altered course to 270° in order to open the distance on T.F. 34.

[2] *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–93.

[3] " *Mobile* ", *Second Battle of the Philippines* (M.013374/44, p. 2). But *Santa Fe* (Left Flank) states she did not arrive on station until 0505 (M.01553/45, p. 14) Admiral Halsey's Despatch (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–14) says " The force was formed up by daylight " (about 0600).

[4] *Action Report, ComCruDiv 13*, (M.01554/45, pp. 3–5) states that disposition was changed to 4-VN at 0505, to 4-S at 0551 and 4-V at 0704, " *South Dakota* ", *Action Report* (M.0303/45, p. 5) gives disposition 4-R at about 0600 and 4-V at about 0700. *Mobile* (M.013374/44, p. 3) reports : " The Heavy Surface Striking Force continued on ahead, first forming cruising disposition 4-S, in which the cruisers were spaced in the forward semi-circle on circle 6 and the battleships on circle 2, then forming the anti-aircraft disposition, Cruising Disposition 4-V. *Massachusetts* remained as guide in the formation centre, the remaining battleships and the cruisers were evenly spaced on circle 6. The destroyers remained as an anti-submarine screen on circle 13, then somewhat later formed as sections."

[5] *Action Report ComCruDiv 13* (M.01554/45, p. 5).

[6] *See* Section 24.

a.m. 25th Oct. east of 360°,[1] but since it appeared likely that the enemy might be to the eastward of 000° one division of the *Essex's*[2] combat air patrol was vectored out on Vice-Admiral Mitscher's orders to conduct a high speed search to the north-east. This was fortunate, for it was those pilots who first sighted the Japanese Northern Force at 0710 in 18° 37′ N., 126° 45′ E., bearing 020°, 135 miles, on a north-easterly course.[3] Enemy fighters forced the *Essex* C.A.P. to climb steadily; nevertheless, for 50 minutes they circled over the enemy, reporting position, composition, and movements. The composition of the force, 17 ships in all, was reported, with considerable accuracy:—

Reported composition	*Actual composition*
One *Zuikaku* class carrier	*Zuikaku* (fleet flagship)
Two *Chitose* class light carriers	*Chitose, Chiyoda*
One *Zuiho* class light carrier	*Zuiho*
Two *Ise* class (battleships with flight deck aft)	*Hyuga, Ise*
One unidentified heavy cruiser	
One *Oyodo* or *Agano* class light cruiser	*Oyodo*
Two *Natori* class light cruiser	*Isudzu, Tama*
One unidentified light cruiser	
Six destroyers	Six or eight destroyers[4]

59. First Strikes by Third Fleet Carriers, 0840 and 1010, 25th October. Sinking of the "Chitose"

When the enemy were first sighted, the aircraft of the first strike were already orbiting 50 miles north of the Third Fleet and thus were only some 85 miles from the enemy. In half an hour they had the Japanese ships in sight, and at 0840 they struck.[5] The *Essex* strike leader (Commander David McCampbell) was made target co-ordinator, and targets were assigned upon arriving. Anti-aircraft fire was heavy during all strikes, and the battleships were using their main batteries. Coloured tracers and bursts were employed. It was evident to the Americans that the enemy carriers had not yet flown on their aircraft, for only about 15 enemy fighters attempted opposition. These were quickly eliminated, and as a result it was possible to keep a target co-ordinator over the ships almost continuously throughout the entire day,

[1] The assigned bearings were:—Task Group 38.2, 190° to 220° and 250° to 290°. Task Group 38.3, 290° to 330°. Task Group 38.4, 330° to 360°. Distance of searches 350 miles (*C.T.G. 38.3, Report* (M.0237/45, p. 7)) but *Lexington* (M.01571/45, p. 11) says 325 miles. Cincpac, *Report*, p. 102 says the search covered radii from 250° to 90°, but perhaps this includes the special search to the north-east, of the *Essex's* Combat Air Patrol.

[2] Task Group 38.3.

[3] M.0237/45 (Rear-Admiral Sherman's Report). *Lexington* (M.01571/45) gives time of sighting 0730 and her track chart shows the enemy steering 020° true. C.T.F. 38 (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–38) gives the bearing of the enemy 020° true, course about 010°. Captain Ohmae, Chief of Staff to Vice-Admiral Ozawa, states (N.I.D. 10080/45, p. 105–6) that they "knew" that they were 100 miles from the American carriers because the latter always took off on reconnaissance about half hour before sunrise. The Japanese carriers sent out search aircraft, but got no response. They did not really expect to be as close as 100 miles. Cincpac, *Report*, p. 102, states that the enemy was reported steering south when first sighted.

[4] For names, *See* Appendix F. It is not certain whether the destroyers *Sugi* and *Kiri* were with the force at this time or whether they were fuelling; they joined up during 25th.

[5] C.T.G. 38.3 in his report (M.0237/45, p. 8) states that the attack was in progress at 0800. But C.T.F. 38 (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–38) states that the first attack groups struck the enemy at 0840, which is the time shown on *Lexington's* track chart (M.01571/45, p. 4).

directing the attack, assigning targets, and reporting results. Vice-Admiral Mitscher had ordered the aircraft crews to sink the enemy carriers and cruisers before attacking the battleships, but this priority of targets was not strictly adhered to.[1] a.m. 25th Oct.

In the ensuing chase the American carriers experienced great difficulty in closing the target, their aircraft launching and recovery courses being to the eastward, whilst the enemy's retirement was to the northward. "Every available minute of time was devoted to gaining distance to the north yet the necessity for getting off the maximum air effort required frequent launchings and recoveries, and many planes with battle damage had to be taken aboard with varying degrees of urgency", writes C.T.G. 38.4,[2] and he makes the point that retirement down wind (westward) instead of north would have taken the Japanese carriers towards their own shore-based aircraft in northern Luzon, and eventually into the comparative safety of the China Sea.

Vice-Admiral Mitscher gave his preliminary report of the first strike at 0850: Two carriers hit badly, one carrier hit, one light carrier untouched, one heavy ship (light carrier or light cruiser) sunk after tremendous explosion on fantail.[3] The *Zuikaku*, Vice-Admiral Ozawa's flagship, had her rudder damaged by a torpedo hit in the first attack and had to resort to hand steering though she could still steam at 20 knots. At 1100 her communication system broke down; accordingly, the Commander-in-Chief transferred to the light cruiser *Oyodo*. The destroyer *Akitsuki* is said to have been sunk instantly at 0857, and the carriers *Zuiho, Chitose* and *Chiyoda* were each hit and damaged by one bomb.[4] When the second strike, furnished by Task Group 38.4, and joined by certain aircraft from *Lexington* and *Langley* (Task Group 38.3)[5] arrived over the Japanese force about 1010 only three carriers could be found—*Zuikaku, Zuiho* and one badly damaged *Chitose* class light carrier (the *Chiyoda*); the fourth one (the *Chitose*) had sunk at 0937. This strike, though smaller, apparently caused greater damage than the first, the three remaining carriers receiving hits which rendered them unmanageable.

60. The Battleships Return South, 1115, 25th October

Meanwhile, at 0705 the first of several urgent requests for assistance had been made by the Seventh Fleet escort carriers who were under attack east of Samar Island by the Japanese main body which had passed through the San Bernardino Strait about midnight. Vice-Admiral Kinkaid sent an urgent call for assistance to the Commander Third Fleet, and at the same time it was made 25th Oct.

[1] C.T.F. 38 comments: "Normally in attacks on enemy combatant ships such as the carriers engagement east of Luzon, carriers and cruisers should be bombed, torpedoed and sunk before attacking battleships. This priority of targets was specified by C.T.F. 38 prior to the attack but was not strictly adhered to . . . The battleship is almost impossible to stop except with another battleship. Many valuable ships, although heavily damaged, escaped being sunk by our air attacks because too much effort was expended on the battleships." (*Secret Information Bulletin No. 22*, p. 78–107.)

[2] Rear-Admiral R. E. Davison, U.S.S. *Franklin*, Comment, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–125.

[3] M.01553/45, "*Santa Fe*", *Action Report*, p. 15. This ship may have been (*a*) the light carrier *Chitose* or (*b*) a destroyer which Captain Ohmae states (N.I.D. 10080/45, p. 105–7) was sunk in the first attack or (*c*) the *Zuikaku* which was damaged aft.

[4] These details are taken from the Japanese records (*The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, p. 313) and N.I.D. 10080/45, *Interrogation* [of Captain Ohmae, Chief of Staff to Vice-Admiral Ozawa] *No.* (*U.S.S. B.S. No. 150*) *Nav. No. 36*, p. 150–7. Admiral King's Final Official Report states that the *Akitsuki* was sunk on 22nd December, 1944, off Honshu by U.S.S./M., but this is now known to be incorrect.

[5] This was a small strike about 16 torpedo aircraft, six bombers, 14 fighters.

25th Oct. clear that the nearest battleship force, the Seventh Fleet, could do little to help, being low on ammunition[1] after its night action in the Surigao Straits.[2] In response to these calls Admiral Halsey at 0848 ordered Task Group 38.1[3] to proceed at high speed to assist Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague.[4] In the confusion of the battle east of Samar it was not apparent until much later that the enemy had definitely broken off the action about 0930, after battering Rear-Admiral Sprague's ships for 2½ hours;[5] and in fact, at 0940 another message came in from Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague, stating that his escort carriers were under attack by four battleships, eight cruisers and other ships and asking for battleships and a strike by fast carriers to be sent at top speed to cover Leyte.[6] The Commander-in-Chief Pacific Fleet (Admiral Nimitz) was evidently uneasy, for at 1000 he inquired the position of Task Force 34. At 1055 Admiral Halsey, having reports that the Northern Force was already badly crippled, decided to take his battleships south to aid the Seventh Fleet. He, therefore, dissolved Task Force 34,[7] which was about 42 miles from the enemy at the time, and ordered Task Group 38.2, consisting of the carriers *Intrepid, Cabot* and *Independence* with the greater part of Task Force 34, namely, all the six battleships, the light cruisers *Vincennes, Miami* and *Biloxi*, and the eight destroyers of Squadron 52[8] to reverse course at 1115 and proceed south. The remaining four cruisers and 10 destroyers in Task Force 34[9] were ordered to rejoin their original task groups, 38.3 and 38.4 respectively, the commanders of which were directed to continue strikes against the enemy carrier force.

Admiral Halsey's decision to take his battleships south at this juncture left to the carriers of Task Groups 38.3 and 38.4 the task of dealing with the Japanese Northern Force. Brilliantly though the American aircraft performed that day in encompassing the destruction of all four of the enemy carriers it was beyond their powers to sink or stop the battleship carriers, *Ise* and *Hyuga*. The difficulty of stopping a battleship except with another battleship[10] is now known; but at that date "the practical difficulty of crippling by air

[1] *Task Group 38.1, Action Report*, M.0411/45, p. 22. But from the wording of Cincpac, Report, p. 104, it would appear that Commander Seventh Fleet did not report that his battleships were low on ammunition until 0922.

[2] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 97 states that Admiral Halsey received the first call for help at 0822. Vice-Admiral McCain (Task Group 38.1) intercepted it as 0725 (his *Report*, M.0411/45, p. 22), but ComBatDiv Nine says the escort carriers' calls for help were received about 0900 (*ComBatDiv Nine* ("*South Dakota*"), *Action Report*, M.0263/45, p. 5).

[3] For composition *see* Appendix A. The proceedings of this Task Group are given in Sections 68, 69.

[4] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 98. But C.T.G. 38.1 in his Report does not mention the receipt of this order, and he makes it clear that he proceeded to help Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague on his own initiative, as described in section 69 of this narrative.

[5] The matter is dealt with in Section 62. From "*Massachusetts'*" *Action Report* (M.0128/45, p. 3) it would appear that the retirement was not known to Commander Third Fleet until after 1210.

[6] *C.T.G. 38.1, Action Report*, M.0411/25, p. 22. It is not known whether Admiral Halsey received this message. He received nine urgent calls for help in all (Cincpac, *Report*, p. 103).

[7] *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–7, but C.T.F. 34, *Report* (M.03212/45, p. 10) states that it was dissolved at 1230.

[8] *See* Appendix D.

[9] Light cruisers *Santa Fe, Mobile* and six destroyers (Task Group 38.3), heavy cruisers *Wichita, New Orleans* and four destroyers (Task Group 38.4).

[10] Comment by C.T.F. 38, *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–107.

strikes alone, a task force of heavy ships at sea and free to manœuvre," was not universally recognised and was one of the lessons of the Battle for Leyte Gulf.[1] 25th Oct.

It is not known to what extent the Commander Third Fleet was hampered in making his decision by the confused nature of the enemy intelligence available, which the Commander Seventh Fleet Battle Line represented.[2] "The outstanding feature of the operations of 24–25 October", wrote the Captain of the *Alabama*, one of Admiral Halsey's battleships, "was the confusing and conflicting reports regarding the location, composition, formation, course and speed of the enemy groups, and of the damage inflicted upon enemy units."[3]

At 1055, when Admiral Halsey decided to return south the air attacks on the Japanese Northern Force were reported to be going well; and Vice-Admiral Ozawa was in full flight. Already, two of the enemy carriers had been damaged and one stopped. The only danger to be feared from the Japanese carriers was their employment by any aircraft which might fly out to them from Luzon. One flight of aircraft, apparently intending to land on the carriers, had been reported approaching the force, but it turned back when the American attack developed.[4] It must have seemed that the elimination of the potential threat from Vice-Admiral Ozawa's force could now be left to Vice-Admiral Mitscher's fast carriers alone.

It would appear that at this juncture the Commander Third Fleet was influenced by the necessity of coming to the help of the Seventh Fleet rather than by the hope of bringing Vice-Admiral Kurita to action[5] though these two proceedings were one and the same, unless the Japanese Admiral retreated on his approach. It is true that the two fleets were then over 300 miles apart, which, taking into account the necessity of fuelling his destroyers, would prevent Admiral Halsey from saving daylight in his arrival in the south. Having allowed himself to be decoyed to the northward on the previous evening he could do little to restore the situation. Nevertheless, the impact of Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's calls for help eventually proved irresistible. The Commander Third Fleet set course south at 20 knots[6] and in due course arrived too late to have any further effect on the course of the Battle for Leyte Gulf, other than to sink an enemy straggler—cruiser or destroyer—from the main body.[7]

At this very moment, as coincidence would have it, his antagonist, Vice-Admiral Kurita, was also making a decision, which was to seal the fate of the Philippines and thereby in due course, of the Japanese Empire.

61. Sinking of the "Zuikaku" and "Zuiho", p.m., 25th October

After Admiral Halsey's departure, Vice-Admiral Mitscher continued to make what northing he could under the handicap of launching and recovering aircraft in a north-easterly wind. The third air strike, some 150 aircraft in all,

[1] M.09953/45, *C.T.G. 38.4 Operations in Support of occupation of Leyte—23rd/31st October, 1944 (1st and 2nd Endorsements)*, p. 48.

[2] *See* Section 27.

[3] *U.S.S. "Alabama", Action Report*, M.04755/45, p. 5.

[4] *C.T.G. 38.4 Operations in support of occupation of Leyte—22nd/31st October, 1944* (1st and 2nd Endorsements), p. 48. No details are forthcoming.

[5] This is the reason given in Cincpac, *Report*, and in the available action reports (*Massachusetts*, M.0128/45, p. 3, *Alabama*, M.04755/45, p. 2, ComBatDiv 9 (*South Dakota*), M.0263/45, p.5). The available extracts from Admiral Halsey's Despatch in *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, stop short at 0730/25.

[6] "*South Dakota*", *Action Report*, M.0303/45, p. 24.

[7] *See* Section 70.

25th Oct. took off at 1145, and shortly after the target co-ordinator, an aircraft from the *Belleau Wood*, reported that the enemy ships were then in two groups. One to the south, termed the " Cripples," consisted of an *Ise* class battleship carrier, two light cruisers and three destroyers, some of them circling a *Chitose* class light carrier (the *Chiyoda*) which was dead in the water and burning as the result of the first air strike of the day.[1] The other group was some 20 to 30 miles north-west of the cripples, and consisted of the carriers *Zuitkaku*, *Zuiho*, the second *Ise* class battleship carrier, three cruisers and two or three destroyers. The enemy ships were about 102 miles, 351° from the American carriers, and the aircraft from Task Group 38.3 were ordered to strike the northern group, which was apparently still steering due north at 15 to 20 knots' speed. Their attack at about 1310 resulted in the sinking about an hour later of the *Zuikaku* with nine direct 1,000 and 2,000 lb. bomb hits. Aircraft from Task Group 38.4 shortly after made a number of hits on the light carrier *Zuiho*, which was seen to sink at 1520, as the result of bombs delivered by the fourth strike.[2]

Judging by the number of attacking American aircraft and the direction from which they came Vice-Admiral Ozawa considered that he had succeeded in diverting two groups of enemy forces, distant from him about 150 to 200 miles and closing. To counter-attack was out of his power, for he had no aircraft and did not know the position of the enemy. He decided to draw the American carriers further north.

At 1315 Rear-Admiral Sherman launched the available aircraft from Task Group 38.3 to join a strike from Task Group 38.4 on the northern battleship carrier. The attack at 1310 had reported one torpedo hit, and three more torpedo hits were now claimed ; but after stopping for about ten minutes she got under way again. The first battleship carrier and the light cruiser and destroyers in the southern group were reported at 1410 by a division of *Lexington's* Combat Air Patrol to be abandoning the carrier *Chiyoda* and heading north to join the main group.

To Rear-Admiral Sherman, the situation appeared most favourable. The Japanese air force had been destroyed on the previous day. The enemy was at the ideal striking range, between 80 and 100 miles away, with the carriers of two task groups closing him at 25 knots ; he could not get away. A good fresh breeze for air operations was 45° on the carriers' starboard bow. But to the Rear-Admiral's dismay, at 1328 Vice-Admiral Mitscher ordered him to go no further north, and in accordance with these orders he headed west, which, with operations into the wind, kept him in the same general locality. However, at 1417 he requested permission to proceed northward once more, to ensure getting in his last strike of the day before dark. Permission was given, and Task Group 38.3 headed north again.

[1] This is the composition of the cripples group shown on *Lexington's* Track Chart (M.01571/45, p. 15) at 1345. C.T.G. 38.3's report (M.0237/45, p. 9) gives one light cruiser instead of two and two destroyers instead of three. A message from C.T.F. 38 at 1250 (" *Santa Fe* ", *Action Report* (M.01553/45, p. 15)), omits the two destroyers and states that both (light) cruisers were damaged ; and also that there was a damaged heavy cruiser, speed 10 knots, 19 miles astern of the northern group (eight miles ahead of the cripples). Cincpac, *Report*, p. 105 gives :—First group—one carrier, one light carrier, one battleship carrier, one heavy cruiser, three destroyers : Second group—one light cruiser (apparently damaged), one light carrier (dead in water), being circled by one battleship carrier and one destroyer : further back one damaged light carrier, and finally 1 destroyer dead in water.

[2] The Japanese times for the sinking of the *Zuikaku* and *Zuiho* are 1414 and 1527 respectively (*see* Appendix M.V.). Cincpac, *Report*, p. 105 gives the time of sinking of the *Zuikaku* as 1430.

The final attack of the day—full deck-loads from the *Essex*, *Lexington* and 25th Oct. *Langley*—took departure at 1615 when the enemy ships were bearing 327°, 92 miles. At this time only ten ships of the original 17 were afloat and under way, namely the light cruisers *Oyodo* (fleet flagship) and *Isudzu*, battleship carriers *Hyuga* and *Ise*, destroyers *Shimotsuki*, *Wakatsuki*, *Hatsutsuki*, *Kuwa*, *Sugi*, *Kiri*, with the *Chiyoda* stopped, afire, and abandoned by the remaining ships. Numerous, but certainly exaggerated claims were made by the crews of this strike. Two torpedo and six direct bomb hits were reported on the battleship carriers, but the only effect was to cause one of them to slow to eight knots temporarily, after which she steamed after her companions at 20 knots. One destroyer was (apparently incorrectly) confirmed as sunk and one 250-lb. bomb hit was said to have been obtained on the stern of a heavy cruiser.[1]

Ten U.S. aircraft were destroyed by A.A. fire during the day.

62. Cruiser and Destroyer Sweep for " Cripples ", p.m., 25th October. Sinking of the " Chiyoda "[2]

In the course of the day's air attacks it became evident to Rear-Admiral Sherman that there might be several crippled Japanese ships which could best be finished off by ships' gunfire or torpedoes after dark, and at 1340 he asked Vice-Admiral Mitscher's permission to organize such a cruiser and destroyer attack. C.T.F. 38 agreed, but warned him that he wanted to take the force out without having to tow damaged ships, and that faced with two enemy battleships this might be difficult. This was also the opinion of Rear-Admiral L. T. du Bose,[3] Commander of Task Unit 38.3.3. and Com CruDiv 13, and temporarily in charge of the two light cruisers *Santa Fe* (flagship) and *Mobile* and two heavy cruisers *Wichita* (flagship of Rear-Admiral C. T. Joy) and *New Orleans* and the ten destroyers *Bagley*, *Knapp*, *Caperton*, *Cogswell*, *Ingersoll*, *Dortch*, *Healy*, *C. K. Bronson*, *Cotten* and *Patterson* of Task Group 38.3 and 38.4, which were all that remained from Task Force 34 after Admiral Halsey took the battleships south. Rear-Admiral du Bose, with his four cruisers in single line ahead and destroyers disposed as anti-submarine screen, had been ordered at 1253 to take station ahead of Task Group 38.3, the more northerly of the two carrier groups, for his force was to form a special striking group. This proceeding had to await Rear-Admiral Sherman's next flight manœuvre and in actual fact Rear-Admiral du Bose never reached his station or reported to C.T.G. 38.3 for duty. He was now warned to prepare, if directed, to make a night torpedo attack on any worth-while targets after dark. Rear-Admiral Sherman was instructed to reinforce him with two destroyers, and the *Essex* was to provide two reconnaissance aircraft.[4]

Orders to go in and attack the crippled group came at 1415, and accordingly at 1429 the striking group proceeded on course 000° at 25 knots, Rear-Admiral Sherman providing a combat air patrol, whilst the cruisers' own aircraft were launched for search and possible rescue of ditched pilots. Vice-Admiral Mitscher had just received information, which he passed on at 1412, that an

[1] *Battle of Philippines, Action Report* [C.T.G. 38.3] (M.0237/45, p. 10). The Japanese account gives no details of this final attack (*see* Appendix M.V., 261500).

[2] This section is based on the reports of *Santa Fe* (M.01553/45 and M.01554/45) and *Mobile* (M.013374/44). Extracts from *Santa Fe's* T.B.S. Log are given in Appendix L.

[3] Appendix L, Signals 1300, 1305, 1400.

[4] Appendix L, Signal 1358. This says " C.T.U. 38.3.4 designate six destroyers to participate," but M.01553/45, p. 16 says " *Callaghan* and *Porterfield* were ordered to join the striking force," and these were the only destroyers which did so.

p.m. 25th Oct. unconfirmed report stated the enemy battleship and one destroyer were quitting the southern group, which, if correct left one damaged carrier and two light cruisers in this group. The enemy were reported bearing 010°, 61 miles.

About 1510 the force reached the locality of the forenoon strikes, and the *Santa Fe* twice stopped to pick up airmen. The cruisers now launched aircraft to search the area for survivors and the destroyers were spread.

At 1610 a *Lexington* aircraft reported that a damaged light carrier (*Chiyoda*) was dead in the water 25 miles on the starboard bow. The destroyers were ordered to form two attack groups one on each quarter of the cruiser column which was apparently in the order *Santa Fe, Mobile, Wichita, New Orleans*. Visibility was 20 to 30 miles. There were scattered lower broken clouds, with light scattered showers.

At 1612 the *Mobile* had radar contact bearing 028°, distant 31,000 yards, and three minutes later she sighted the *Chiyoda*, stopped, bearing 040°, at a range of 29,600 yards. The *Santa Fe* reported that the bearing and range were 041°, 23,000 yards when she in her turn sighted the enemy carrier at 1618.

Rear-Admiral du Bose at 1617 had ordered the heavy cruisers to open fire when ready. The *Wichita* and *New Orleans* opened at 1624. They were followed at 1631 by the *Santa Fe* with her main armament, the range now being down to 14,460 yards. The *Mobile* opened fire with her main battery, using A.P. shell, at 1634 after requesting permission. The *Santa Fe* and *New Orleans* used no-dye-loaded projectiles, the *Mobile* orange, and the *Wichita* green. The light cruisers, at least, experienced no difficulty in spotting their own salvos, though assessment of damage inflicted by any one ship was not possible, since all four cruisers were firing simultaneously. The *Chiyoda* returned the fire, but her fall of shot, apparently of small calibre,[1] was very short, the *Mobile* observing no splash closer than 6,000 yards. At 1636, when the range was down to 12,800 yards the *Santa Fe* opened fire with her secondary battery, using A.A. common shell. The bearing of the enemy carrier was now 082°, and course was altered to 020°.

By 1639 the *Chiyoda* was being hit frequently and was heavily on fire, listing to port and down by the stern. ComCruDiv 13 ordered all cruisers except the *Wichita* to stop what was only target practice; his own ship had already expended no less than 281 rounds of 6-in./47 A.P. and 31 rounds of 5-in./38 A.A. common and the *Mobile* 294 rounds of 6-in. A.P. The destroyers on the starboard hand were ordered to close the target and torpedo her if necessary, but before they reached her, at 1655 she sank in 19° 08′ N., 126° 32′ E.[2]

This was the only instance during the war in which surface craft participated in the sinking of a Japanese aircraft carrier.

63. The Night Action, p.m., 25th October [3]

The next hour was occupied by the cruisers in recovering aircraft. This was completed at 1753, and the group then proceeded at 25 knots on course 345°; night fighters had reported the presence of enemy ships in that direction, and smoke had been sighted on the horizon on that general bearing. The

[1] "*Santa Fe*" *Report* (M.02553/45, p. 77), says the splashes appeared to be 3-in. or 4-in. *Mobile*, Report (M.013374/44, p. 12) estimates one 5-in. dual purpose gun. C.B. 1815 (October, 1944) gives *Chiyoda's* armament as 4–5·1-in. H.A. and 4–3-in. H.A.

[2] *C.T.G. 38.3, Action Report* (M.0237/45, p. 11).

[3] *See* Plan 10 and Signals, Appendix L. This section is based on the same reports as the previous one.

destroyers *Porterfield* and *Callaghan*, sent by Rear-Admiral Sherman, had just joined, and ComDesRon 55—Captain C. R. Todd in the *Porterfield*—became senior officer of destroyers and formed four attack groups of three destroyers each, which were stationed astern of the cruiser column.[1] p.m. 25th Oct.

Just before sunset, which was at 1804, one of the aircraft sent in a report, showing that the enemy were very strung out, no less than six or seven ships lagging astern of the main group. All were proceeding on a northerly course, at various speeds.

At 1813 two night fighter aircraft sent from the *Essex* reported on station and ready for duty. Sent on ahead by Rear-Admiral du Bose they reported at 1825 one enemy light cruiser or heavy cruiser and two destroyers bearing 335°, distant 22 miles. At 1835 the *Santa Fe* made surface contact at 351°, 17 miles. The *Wichita* and *Mobile* reported the same contact two minutes later.

At 1841 ComCruDiv 13 altered course to 030° and after a short period of plotting, the enemy ships were identified as three in number, thought to be a light cruiser and two destroyers, stopped and engaged either in effecting repairs or picking up survivors. Probably they were the three destroyers *Hatsutsuki, Wakatsuki*, and *Kuwa*, engaged in rescuing the survivors of the *Zuikaku* and *Zuiho*.[2]

Course was altered to 050° at 1851 and ships were ordered to open fire as soon as they were within range, the light cruisers on the near targets, the heavy cruisers on the far target. The *Mobile, Wichita* and *New Orleans* opened fire almost simultaneously at 1852. The *Mobile* took the nearest target, bearing 330°, range 18,870 yards. The *Wichita* and *New Orleans* opened up on the far target of the three. The *Santa Fe* opened fire at 1905 on the nearest target, bearing 348°, range 16,950 yards, target course 110°, speed 30 knots. All ships used full radar controlled blind fire up to the last four minutes of the engagement when the target was illuminated by starshells. The two smallest and most distant of the three targets (the *Wakatsuki* and *Kuwa*) made off to the northward shortly after fire was opened, and by 1905 were out of range.[3] At 1906 the *Wichita* obtained permission to shift to the nearest target, the *Hatsutsuki*, whose range was 17,000 yards. The latter manœuvred at varying speeds up to 26 knots.[4] constantly and effectively, to throw off the gunfire. She returned the fire intermittently but none of the American ships was hit. Smoke was also employed for concealment and, apparently, to simulate damage. The spotting problem was complicated, on account of the great number of splashes near the target, particularly after the *Wichita* joined in until fire was checked at 1918.[5] The *Mobile* changed from armour-piercing shell to high capacity and back to armour-piercing again between 1852 and 1907. The *Santa Fe* fired armour-piercing shell with her main battery and anti-aircraft common with her secondary battery, throughout the action.

[1] Appendix L, Signals 39–43, and 46.

[2] Japanese account (*The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, p. 313) where, however, it is also stated that the *Hatsutsuki* and *Isudzu* reported engaging enemy surface units about this time.

[3] *Mobile's* Track Chart shows them fading from the screen at 1916 and 1919 respectively.

[4] *C.T.G. 38.3 Action Report* (M.0237/45, p. 11) *Santa Fe* states that the target manœuvred at speeds up to 30 knots and *Mobile* (M.013374/44, p. 13) credits her with a maximum speed of 34 knots.

[5] "*Mobile*" *Action Report* (M.013374/44, p. 13).

p.m. 25th Oct. It was, no doubt, as the result of Vice-Admiral Mitscher's warning to Rear-Admiral du Bose, against allowing any of his ships to become immobilised by battle damage, that the lone Japanese ship was able for a period to call the tune against her formidable antagonists. It must by then have been dark, and the American ships were still firing in full radar control. At 1904 the enemy commenced a turn towards them, the range being about 18,500 yards. The manœuvre was apparently recognised on the plot two minutes later, for ComCruDiv 13 who had been steering 330° since 1902 altered course successively through 060° (1906) and 080° (1911) until at 1916 he was running directly from the enemy on course 120°, in order to avoid possible torpedo attack.[1]

Meanwhile, despite the stupendous number of shells which had been fired (the *Santa Fe* alone expending 892 rounds of 6-in. and 5-in. between 1905 and 1918) the enemy, though on fire, was still steaming at 20 knots. At 1915 on the suggestion of ComCruDiv 13 ComDesDiv 100, Captain W. J. Miller in the *Cogswell*, with the two ships of his section, *Ingersoll* and *Caperton*, steamed out to make a torpedo attack. The enemy ship had made a radical turn to the northward two minutes before, and the impracticability of the destroyers attacking from the position in which they were was soon recognised and ComDesRon 55, Captain C. R. Todd in the *Porterfield*, was permitted to recall them.

About 1918 both the American light cruisers checked fire, apparently without orders from ComCruDiv 13, who however, in general maintained a firm hold over his ships' gunfire. From now onwards firing was intermittent. Rear-Admiral du Bose turned back to course 030 at 1922. About this time the enemy, still steaming at 20 knots, made another short turn towards him, which was recognised at 1927, and he again steered to open the range. However, by 1930 the Japanese ship was on a northerly course once more, though with her speed a quarter of an hour later reduced to 17 knots.

At 1932 ComCruDiv 13 ordered the *Cogswell's* section of destroyers to attempt another torpedo attack on the enemy, whilst the light cruisers covered them with slow fire.[2] At 2012 the destroyers reached a position some 5,500 yards directly astern of the enemy ship, which after slowing until almost stopped had by now picked up speed, and was once again proceeding about 20 knots. From this position the American destroyers fired half salvos of torpedoes and thereupon opened fire with their guns, which was returned.

At 2043, when the range was " 6850 yards " the *Santa Fe* commenced firing starshells to illuminate the target which was still fighting back, though with the short range and flat trajectory it was obvious that the end was near. At 2047, with the range down to " 4380 yards " Rear-Admiral du Bose ordered all ships to cease fire and a destroyer to finish off the enemy with a torpedo ; but at 2056, before this could be done the Japanese vessel, burning furiously, sank to the accompaniment of six very heavy underwater explosions. She had been literally punched to pieces, and her type was not satisfactorily determined at the time, though she was thought to be a light cruiser or a *Terutsuki* class destroyer.[3] She was the destroyer *Hatsutsuki*.

[1] " *Santa Fe* " *Action Report* (M.01553/45, p. 18), " *Mobile* " *Action Report* (M.013374/44 p. 13).

[2] Appendix L. Signals 1930–1938. " *Mobile* " *Action Report* (M.013374/44, p. 9) says ComDesDiv 100 started towards the target at 1929.

[3] *Santa Fe* fired 952 rounds 6″/47 A.P., 104 5″/38 starshell and 972 5″/38 A.A. common. *Mobile* fired 245 rounds 6″ A.P. and 534 rounds 6″ High Capacity. The expenditure of the heavy cruisers is not known, but *Wichita* expended approximately 22 per cent. and *New Orleans* 35 per cent. of the main battery A.P. (" *Santa Fe* " *Action Report* (M.01553/45, p. 40).

64. Sinking of the " Tama " by Submarine

At 2105 *Essex's* night fighters reported that the nearest contact to the north bore 005, 42 miles, on course 000 speed 20 knots and that there were no other contacts in the area 50 miles north-east to 50 miles north-west. Rear-Admiral du Bose considered the enemy were too far away to be caught. His ships were low on fuel, and he gave orders to form cruising disposition and set course at 25 knots to rejoin the carrier groups. The force had fired 4,175 rounds of 5-in., 6-in. and 8-in. ammunition in these two engagements. p.m. 25th Oct.

Vice-Admiral Ozawa had meanwhile lost one more of his ships, the light cruiser *Tama*, sunk on the evening of 25th by submarine.

At 1509 on 25th, Commander Submarines Pacific had informed his submarines of the engagement in progress, and ordered two " wolf packs " of three submarines each to patrol on the probable line of retirement of the enemy. Of the first pack, composed of the *Haddock*, *Tuna* and *Halibut*, the first named at 1844 fired six electric torpedoes at a battleship screened on either bow by a light cruiser and a destroyer, at a range of 4,000 yards, the position of the attack being about 15 miles to the eastward of the ship sunk by Rear-Admiral du Bose at 2056. The attack apparently failed.[1]

The second attack was delivered against the light cruiser *Tama* which had at 2301 been damaged early in the day and ordered to proceed to Okinawa unescorted. The *Jallao*, which was operating with the *Atule* and *Pintado*, fired three electric torpedoes at the *Tama* from the bow tubes at a range of about 1,200 yards. All three missed, but four stern tubes fired at a range of about 700 yards secured three hits, and the cruiser was seen to break up and sink by the *Pintado*, who had arrived on the scene. The position was about 60 miles to the northward of the *Haddock's* attack..

Of the 17 ships of the Mobile Force that sailed from the Inland Sea on 20th October there remained with Vice-Admiral Ozawa only the light cruiser *Oyodo*, the two battleship carriers *Hyuga* and *Ise*, and the destroyer *Shimotsuki*. Nevertheless, he was still game ; and when at 1915 he received a report from the destroyer *Hatsutsuki* and light cruiser *Isudzu*, who had been assigned to rescue the survivors of the *Zuikaku* and *Chiyoda*, that they were engaging enemy ships at 1905 and 1910, he turned 16 points (1930) and proceeded to their assistance at 16 knots. No reply was received to a request for the position of the *Hatsutsuki* ; and after searching until about midnight without making contact with either friend or foe the Vice-Admiral turned northward once more. The *Wakatsuki* rejoined about this time and made her report of the attack by Rear-Admiral du Bose, who was credited with a force of two apparent battleships, two large cruisers and about one flotilla of destroyers. Of the *Hatsutsuki* nothing more was heard, and the fate of the *Tama* was also unknown to the Japanese. The destroyers *Sugi* and *Kiri* had also become separated from the main body during rescue work ; failing to make communication and being short of fuel they proceeded to Takao, where they arrived at 0930 on 26th, and returned to Kure via Oshima on 30th.

This day's work had cost the Japanese four out of their existing total of seven carriers. Nevertheless, Vice-Admiral Ozawa had duly carried out his part of the complicated plan of operations and had enticed Admiral Halsey away to the north for sufficiently long to prevent interference with the Centre Force. But the carriers had been sacrificed in vain, for at the eleventh hour—literally—Vice-Admiral Kurita's heart failed him, he abandoned the plan, and the fate of the Philippines was decided.

[1] Commander Submarines Pacific claimed that one heavy cruiser was sunk, but this has not been confirmed.

CHAPTER IX

PURSUIT OF THE JAPANESE CENTRE FORCE, 25th–27th OCTOBER

(See Plan 7)

65. Sinking of the "Suzuya", 25th October

a.m. 25th Oct.

After abandoning the chase of the Seventh Fleet escort carriers off Samar Vice-Admiral Kurita spent some two hours in assembling his ships, appreciating the situation including fuel, and preparing for action in the Gulf. For the next two days he was to be subjected during daylight to constant air attacks by the Third and Seventh Fleets and Army aircraft, and to submarine attack, losing two heavy cruisers, two light cruisers and four destroyers, though his fleet was saved from complete destruction through the inability of Admiral Halsey's fast battleships to come up with it after their return south, on the morning of 25th, from supporting the Third Fleet carriers in their attacks on the enemy Northern Force.

Rear-Admiral Stump continued his attacks, launching his third strike at 0935. The *Haruna*, who had been ordered to attack him, was too close for him to risk turning into the wind which now was from 049°, 7 knots, but he successfully launched his strike, 12 torpedo aircraft, one with a torpedo, the remainder with four 500-lb. S.A.P. bombs each, and eight fighters, without casualty, whilst holding to his course of 120°. The strike immediately threw its weight against the enemy and reported three bomb hits on the previously twice-torpedoed heavy cruisers. One of these was sighted with destroyers attending her, by survivors of the *Gambier Bay* whilst in the water, and by an aircraft from the *Kitkun Bay*, which after being launched at 0700 landed about 1000 on board the *Manila Bay* and was launched again about an hour later after refuelling and reloading. At this time the enemy cruiser had a bad list to port and her main deck was awash, and a destroyer was picking up survivors.

A fourth Japanese heavy cruiser, the *Suzuya*, was also now in trouble. Her movements from the time she left the formation at 0745, to stand by the torpedoed *Kumano*, are unknown, but she was damaged, apparently by air attack, and sank early in the afternoon when the fire aboard her got out of control and exploded her torpedoes.

Close by the sinking heavy cruiser was another large unidentified vessel, thought by some of the survivors and by aircraft pilots to be a battleship or smaller. She was stopped, but towards dark she got under way and made off to the northward. Her position was given by aircraft as approximately 40 miles 350° from Task Unit 77.4.2. at about 1130.

66. Communication Failure Wrecks the Japanese Plan

The skilful handling of Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's force, the selfless devotion of his aircraft and of his screening destroyers and destroyer escorts, and the timely support of Rear-Admiral Stump had resulted in the sinking of three Japanese heavy cruisers and driving a fourth damaged from the scene. Apart, however, from one or more hits on the light cruiser *Yahagi*, which did not affect her speed and manœuvrability, this was the extent of the damage to Vice-Admiral Kurita's force in the morning's fighting.

On the credit side was the (quite unfounded) report from the Japanese 10th Destroyer Flotilla after the latter made its attack between 0900 and 0925,

that three or four of the American carriers were seriously damaged or sinking : in all, the Japanese Second Fleet considered it had sunk these three or four carriers, two heavy cruisers, and some destroyers.

Nevertheless, the situation in which Vice-Admiral Kurita found himself a.m. 25th Oct. called for resolution and clear judgment.

He had reason to believe that the American carrier aircraft, after attacking his fleet, were landing on Leyte to rearm and refuel. Whether, in addition, American land-based aircraft were also stationed on Leyte he did not know. He suspected the presence of another carrier force in the neighbourhood, for he had sighted the masts of one or more ships to the south-eastward, and had despatched the *Haruna* to attack them at 0905. These were part of Rear-Admiral Stump's escort carrier Task Unit 77.4.2 though Kurita could not hazard a guess as to what they were, for he had not even identified the ships he had been chasing for over two hours this morning. His ignorance of the locations of the American forces in general was profound. He was dependent for enemy intelligence on the Combined Base Air Force at Manila, but the weather on the 23rd, 24th and 25th was bad, the Navy's land-based scouting force was at its lowest level at the time, and the aircraft were only able to cover small sections of the area. Although each task group of the American Third Fleet was reconnoitred by Japanese aircraft during the 24th the only intelligence which reached Vice-Admiral Kurita was that the American carriers were east of Luzon in about 17° 30′ N., 125° 30′ E. Since then, he had had no news of Admiral Halsey's force. He knew, however, from intercepted signals, that American forces, both surface and air, were concentrating to attack him off Leyte.[1] He expected no assistance or cover from the Japanese naval land-based air fleet, most of which, he thought, was in Luzon, assigned for action in the north as circumstances might require, and he knew nothing of the air attack which had just been made by Japanese land-based aircraft on the survivors of the force with which he had been in action this morning,[2] in fact, at 1150, an hour after the *St. Lo* was hit he made a signal to the Commanders-in-Chief of the First Air Fleet and Southwest Area Fleet, ordering them to attack.[3] Altogether, he expected that his entry into Leyte Gulf would bring upon him heavy air attacks.

He was badly behind on his schedule. Under the revised plan, when Vice-Admiral Nishimura advanced his time of arrival at Leyte by four hours, he should have been in the Gulf about 0700 (three or four hours earlier than 1100 of the original plan), whereas it was now well on in the forenoon and he was still some 50 or 60 miles from the entrance. On the other hand, Vice-Admiral Nishimura had reported that he was delayed : he had duly reported the air attack made upon him in the Sulu Sea on the morning of the 24th, the torpedo boat attack in the early hours of the 25th in the approaches to Surigao Strait, and had sent a further message shortly after, saying that he would be delayed in entering the Gulf.[4]

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[1] Signals, Appendix M.II.

[2] N.I.D. 10086/45 *Interrogation* [of Commander Otano, Staff Officer (Operations) in Second Fleet] *No. (U.S.S. B.S. 170) Nav. No. 41*, p. 170–5.

[3] Appendix M.II, 251150.

[4] N.I.D. 10056/45, *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. B.S. No. 47) Nav. No. 9*, p. 47–24. Kurita's Staff Officer, Operations (Commander T. Otano) states : "We received a message from Admiral Nishimura that they were going to make their approach about 2 o'clock in the morning on the 25th although the plan was . . . that they would approach one hour before daybreak on the 25th at the earliest. . . . We received this message late in the afternoon on the 24th at which time it was too late to order him to conform to the original plan" (N.I.D. 10086/45, p. 170–3) cf. Appendix M.III, signal 242020.

25th Oct. It is not known at what time Vice-Admiral Kurita learnt of the failure of the mission of the Southern Force, which he did through a brief message giving no details: it was clear that the Southern Force had suffered severely, but Vice-Admiral Kurita did not know where the disaster had occurred, and the news did not influence the important decision he was about to make.[1]

Of the Japanese carrier force in the north there had also been no news at all since the general report on the 24th that their aircraft had attacked and that some had landed in the water and others in Luzon; and Vice-Admiral Kurita was completely in the dark regarding the disastrous situation now developing in the north.

The *Yamato* sent up two reconnaissance aircraft, but neither of them brought any information: the aircraft which went north reported it had seen nothing; from the other, despatched over the Surigao Strait area, there came no word. Both aircraft landed ashore and neither returned to the flagship. This left Kurita without information as to the American forces in the Gulf. On leaving Brunei he had estimated that there were about 200 transports there together with a balanced fleet containing some seven battleships. Air coverage of the Leyte area was assigned to the seaplanes of the fleet which had been landed a day or two before the operation commenced and were based at San Jose, in south-west Mindoro. But the weather was bad, the range of the seaplanes was small, and they sent no information.

67. Vice-Admiral Kurita turns North, 1236, 25th October

At 1236 Vice-Admiral Kurita took a "momentary" and far-reaching decision. On his own responsibility he abandoned the plan to enter Leyte Gulf and altered course to the north.[2] By this time, the American landing at Leyte had been confirmed and to his mind it was now less important than before to attack the transports and invasion shipping;[3] moreover, it was thought that the transports would by now have heard of the battle and would have begun to disperse out of the danger zone.[4] Ignorant as he was of the situation in the north Vice-Admiral Kurita could form no clear plan other than to bring Admiral Halsey's Task Force to action if he could happen upon them.

> "The conclusion from our gunfire and anti-aircraft fire during the day," he states, "had led me to believe in my uselessness, my ineffectual position, if I proceeded into Leyte Bay where I would come under even heavier aircraft attack. I therefore concluded to go north and join Admiral Ozawa for co-ordinated action against your Northern Task Forces . . .

[1] Vice-Admiral Kurita's Interrogation N.I.D. 10056/45, p. 47–17. The message would appear to be Appendix M.IV, 250532. Vice-Admiral Kurita's Chief of Staff states the exact opposite to Kurita, namely, that one of the most important reasons for abandoning the plan to enter Leyte Gulf was that the 2nd Diversion Attack Force reported the almost complete destruction of Vice-Admiral Nishimura's force, though he could not remember at what time the message was received (N.I.D. 10079/45, p. 149–7). His Staff Officer (Operations) says the news was received before 0400, and he reinforces his statement by saying that when they sighted Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's force off Samar, some of the men thought that it was a Japanese force; however, he knew that it could not be so, because he had received the report of the fate of Nishimura's force (N.I.D. 10086/45, p. 170–6). This seems unlikely, however, since Kurita at 0702 ordered Nishimura to join him (Appendix M.II, 250702). The Japanese account gives as one of the reasons for abandoning the plan, the possibility, in view of what had happened to Nishimura's and Shima's forces, of falling into a trap if the intention to enter Leyte Gulf were persisted in (*The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, p. 304).

[2] Appendix M.II, 251236.

[3] N.I.D. 10056/45, *Interrogation No.* (*U.S.S. B.S. No. 17*) *Nav. No. 9*, p. 47–19.

[4] N.I.D. 10079/45, *Interrogation No.* (*U.S.S. B.S. 149*) *Nav. No. 35*, p. 149–8.

> It wasn't a question of destruction, that was neither here nor there. 1236
> It was a question of what good I could do in the Bay [Leyte Gulf.] I 25th Oct.
> concluded that under the heavy attack from ship and shore based planes, I could not be effective. Therefore, on my own decision I concluded it was best to go north and join Admiral Ozawa."[1]

And, almost in the same breath,

> "My intention was not primarily to join Admiral Ozawa but to go north and seek out the enemy . . .
>
> I considered [it] my mission to go north and seek out your carrier task force and bring it under engagement with the assumption that Admiral Ozawa to the north would thereby be assisted by it. But it was not to join forces with Admiral Ozawa . . . The immediate object was to hit the enemy."[2]

Somewhere to the north of him there was, or had been yesterday, an American task force.[3] He hoped that it was now hurrying south to help the ships he had been engaging this morning and that he would meet it on the way, in the open sea where his battleships would have liberty of manœuvre under air attack.[4]

Had Vice-Admiral Kurita but known, when on his own responsibility he abandoned the carefully prepared plan he could have entered Leyte Gulf opposed by no more than battleships short of ammunition and destroyers short of torpedoes; and with immunity from air attack by Admiral Halsey's carriers other than the one group under Vice-Admiral McCain which, as yet of course, unknown to him, just half an hour ago had launched at his force, from the great range of 300 miles, a strike whose effect would have been diminished by every mile of westing. For with the exception of Vice-Admiral McCain's Task Group, 38.1, all Admiral Halsey's fast carriers had been engaged since 0840 on this day in attacking the Japanese Northern Force, which had brilliantly fulfilled its function of drawing off the Third Fleet to the northward. But it was not until after he abandoned the attack on Leyte, that Kurita learnt of the engagement, and even then he knew no more than that the *Zuikaku* had been damaged and the Admiral was shifting his flag. Vice-Admiral Ozawa's flagship, the *Zuikaku*, reported the attacks; the wireless station at Formosa got

[1] Interrogation, N.I.D. 10056/45, pp. 47–16, 18. Vice-Admiral Kurita also stated: "I sent a report to Admiral Ozawa that I had turned north and would be able to co-ordinate my attack with the night destroyer attack which I learned Admiral Ozawa was going to make, which I had learned from other sources . . . sometime during the day—I do not remember when . . . I do not know the source." Captain Ohmae, Chief of Staff to Vice-Admiral Ozawa, says that Vice-Admiral Kurita in his interrogation confused the times and that the message of which he spoke must have been that sent by Vice-Admiral Ozawa after [Rear-Admiral du Bose's] attack on a destroyer of the Northern Force at 1730 [actually at 1852, *see* Section 63] saying that he intended to attack Admiral Halsey's force by night, and that since Vice-Admiral Kurita could not have received this message until he was again approaching San Bernardino Strait, it could not have influenced his decisions (N.I.D 10080/45, p. 150–8).

[2] N.I.D. 10056/45, pp. 47–19, 20.

[3] The Japanese account of the battle (*The Campaigns of the Pacific War*, p. 304) says that one of the reasons that influenced Vice-Admiral Kurita's decision to turn north, was to attack the American task force reported in position 5° Suluan Light 113 miles at 0945 (25th October clearly understood—cf., Appendix M.II, 251150). But this position is to the *southward* of Vice-Admiral Kurita's position when he turned north, and it obviously refers to either Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's or Rear-Admiral Stump's task unit.

[4] N.I.D. 10086/45, *Interrogation No.* (*U.S.S. B.S. 170*) *Nav. No. 41*, p. 170–7.

25th Oct. part of the messages ; but neither Tokyo nor the Japanese Second Fleet heard anything, and it was not until later that it was discovered that the fault lay in the flagship's wireless transmitter.[1] On this small mechanical failure a great enterprise finally foundered.

68. Rear-Admiral Stump continues his Air Attacks

Vice-Admiral Kurita had not expected that by going north he would escape air attacks, but he considered his force would be better able to meet them in the open sea than in the narrow waters of Leyte Gulf, and he might, also, by co-ordination be of use to Vice-Admiral Ozawa.

Attack was not long in coming. At 1115 Rear-Admiral Stump launched his fourth strike, a large one consisting of 19 fighters and 37 torpedo aircraft, of which 11 carried torpedoes and the remainder S.A.P. and G.P. bombs. The main body of the enemy's force was found in 11° 43′ N., 126° 13′ E., some 30 miles north-west of the crippled battleship and cruiser. Pilots reported its course to be 225° but C.T.U. 77.4.2 thought it possible that it was engaged in evasive manœuvres which prevented the air crews from estimating correctly the mean course. The attack was directed against the undamaged main body and one torpedo hit (on a battleship), several bomb hits, and strafing of destroyers were claimed.[2] By the time the fifth strike, airborne at 1331, was over the enemy a destroyer (possibly the *Nowake*) in similar condition was reported with the crippled battleship and heavy cruiser. Both this strike and the sixth and last, whose launch commenced at 1508, had no heavier loading than G.P. bombs and rockets, all available S.A.P. bombs and torpedoes having been expended ; and the last strike, which like No. 5 must have been primarily harassing, was directed against the light forces. Pilots of earlier strikes, including some of the returning aircraft of Vice-Admiral McCain's Task Group 38.1 which were taken aboard Task Unit 77.4.2, short of fuel, reported that at 1420 the main Japanese force was in 12° 05′ N., 125° 45′ E. on a northerly course. One cruiser (possibly the *Kumano*), was reported lagging astern, damaged, and from this time on, no more than three heavy cruisers were seen in company with the main body, though the battleship crippled by Rear-Admiral Stump's first two strikes in the morning, would appear to have joined by 1723/25 when his sixth and last strike of the day reported that the force appeared to consist of four battleships, three heavy cruisers, two light cruisers and seven destroyers, with two of the battleships trailing oil and seemingly in trouble, one of the light cruisers lagging astern, and one heavy cruiser apparently damaged.

69. An American Message Miscarries

Early in the afternoon the air attacks of the escort carriers were reinforced by massive strikes from Task Group 38.1 of the Third Fleet, though their possible effect was greatly reduced through an unfortunate failure of communication between the task group and the commander Seventh Fleet which necessitated arming the torpedo aircraft with the inferior weapon bombs.

[1] N.I.D. 10080/45, *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. B.S. No. 150) Nav. No. 36*, p. 150–9.

[2] The aircraft from *Kitkun Bay* referred to in Section 65, which apparently led this strike, reported that a destroyer was seen to blow up, but his claims (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–91) do not agree with those of C.T.U. 77.4.2. His sketch plan (op. cit., p. 78–90) showing four battleships, five heavy cruisers and nine destroyers evidences mistaken identifications, though the total number of ships, 18, is possibly correct.

When Vice-Admiral McCain, C.T.G. 38.1 learnt of the attack on Rear- 25th Oct.
Admiral C. A. F. Sprague's escort carriers off Samar on the morning of 25th October, through intercepting C.T.F. 77's message to Commander Third Fleet at 0725,[1] his five carriers, *Wasp* (flagship), *Hornet*, *Hancock*, *Cowpens*, and *Monterey* were fuelling in 15° N., 130° E., about 357 miles E.N.E. of San Bernardino Strait. In accordance with Admiral Halsey's instructions he had launched searches at dawn covering a 400 miles area between 300° and 020°. At 0900 he heard of the attack by aircraft of Groups 38.2 and 38.3 on the enemy Northern Force. By now, all but two of his ships, the carrier *Hancock* and heavy cruiser *Boston* had completed fuelling. Directing them to cast off from the tankers, he cancelled further searches to the north and ordered a strike to be prepared against the Northern Force.[2]

It is said that at 0848 the Commander Third Fleet sent Vice-Admiral McCain orders to strike the enemy force attacking the Seventh Fleet escort carriers off Samar and to make best speed towards the Leyte area ;[3] but these orders, if they ever reached C.T.G. 38.1, had not been received by 0930[4] when the Commander Third Fleet reported the enemy carriers retiring to the northwards and ordered T.G. 38.1 to "strike as practicable,"[5] the intended target being these carriers. Ten minutes later, however, came Vice-Admiral Kinkaid's call for battleships to proceed at top speed to cover Leyte and asking for a fast carrier strike. "There was an ominous tone in the frantic calls for assistance from the Seventh Fleet units under attack," writes the Captain of the *Hornet*[6] and Vice-Admiral McCain reacted at once. Anticipating fresh instructions (which duly arrived at 1001) from C.T.F. 38, his Task Group commander, Vice-Admiral Mitscher, ordering him to launch the earliest possible strike, he immediately altered course to 245° and increased speed to 30 knots to support the escort carriers under attack. This speed the task group maintained for five hours. Computations showed that the distance to the target was too great for the torpedo aircraft to carry torpedoes and return without refuelling, and C.T.G. 30.1 therefore sent a message to Vice-Admiral Kinkaid, asking whether aircraft could land on Tacloban airfield on Leyte.[7] No reply was

[1] *C.T.G. 38.1, Action Report* (M.0411/45, p. 22).

[2] Ibid.

[3] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 98. This, however, is a secondary source. The only reference to the 0848 orders which has been found *in an original report* is a single, oblique one by C.T.F. 34 (*Report*, p. 9, M.03212/45) : "At 0855 Commander Third Fleet informed C.T.F. 38 that orders were in the air directing C.T.G. 38.1 to proceed in to assist T.U. 77.4.3."

[4] There is no mention of the receipt of these orders in Vice-Admiral McCain's Report, nor in the report of his flagship, the *Wasp*. No reports are forthcoming from any other ships of the task group. The statement in Cincpac, *Report*, p. 98, viz. : "Task Group 38.1 was fuelling when the order to proceed to the support of Task Group 77.4 arrived, but when this was completed at 0940, the group headed on course 245° at 30 knots," is not borne out by Vice-Admiral McCain, who states that he stopped fuelling at 0900 ; his report makes it clear that he proceeded to help Task Group 77.4 on his own initiative, without orders from either Commander Third Fleet or his Task Force Commander (C.T.F. 38). The only orders to proceed to assist Task Group 77.4 which are mentioned in Vice-Admiral McCain's Report are those received at 1001 from C.T.F. 38. Admiral Halsey's Despatch covering this period is not forthcoming.

[5] [C.T.G. 38.1] *Action Report*, M.0411/45, p. 22. It is not known why orders were sent to Vice-Admiral McCain at 0848 to assist the escort carriers off Samar and at 0930 to attack the Japanese Northern Force, although the situation had not changed in the meantime as far as Admiral Halsey could have known.

[6] *Secret Information Bulletin No. 22* (p. 78–99).

[7] M.0411/45, *C.T.G. 38.1, Action Report*, p. 22.

25th Oct. received, consequently the torpedo aircraft had to be loaded with bombs. By this time the enemy was in full retreat, and the situation called for the maximum effort to be directed against his battleships, in an attempt to slow them[1] until the Third Fleet could complete their destruction. But the bombs with which the torpedo aircraft had perforce to be armed, were of little effect against battleships.[2] This was the more unfortunate because, had Vice-Admiral McCain but known, a portion of Tacloban airfield was serviceable and was actually used by many both of his own distressed aircraft and those of the escort carriers, after completing their strikes.

70. Task Group 38.1 Strikes 1300/25th October

A hundred aircraft—48 fighters,[3] 33 bombers and 19 torpedo aircraft—composed the first strike, launched at 1030 at a range of 300 miles, the limit of the torpedo and bomber aircraft range with bomb load,[4] with small chance of survival unless the target could be located promptly and conditions were favourable for recovery.[5] The flight was picked up by Rear-Admiral Stump's (C.T.U. 77.4.2) radar and at 1255 was vectored by his flagship, the *Natoma Bay*, until the flight leader " tallyhoed " the main enemy force at 1302.[6] The main force at this time was reported by aircraft[7] to be in approximate latitude 12° N. some 15 miles off Samar Island, heading on a course 330°, speed 25 knots, towards San Bernardino Strait.

At 1255 Vice-Admiral McCain launched his second and last strike of the day. As there was still no indication whether aircraft could land at Tacloban he was led to assume that the Japanese had control of the air over the airfield or else that it was not operational, and accordingly he instructed his carriers to rig wing tanks on all bomber and torpedo aircraft of this strike also and to load with bombs instead of torpedoes. The returning aircraft landed aboard the carriers between 1530 and 1600. In all, the air groups of Task Group 38.1 placed 177 aircraft over the Japanese Centre Force in these two strikes, the only two undertaken. An aggregate of 65 tons of bombs was dropped and 64 rockets fired ; several hits were recorded.[8] The Americans lost eight aircraft—

[1] Comment by C.T.F. 38, *Secret Information Bulletin No. 22*, p. 78–107.

[2] Comment by C.T.G. 38.3, op cit., p. 78–56.

[3] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 98 says 47 fighters.

[4] M.0411/45, *C.T.G. 38.1, Action Report*, p. 25 and M.0715/45, *U.S.S. " Wasp ", Action Report*, p. 7 and Track Chart, p. 35. But Cincpac, *Report*, p. 98 says the range was 335 miles.

[5] C.O. U.S.S. *Hornet*, Comment, *Secret Information Bulletin No. 22*, p. 78–100.

[6] Report of C.T.U. 77.4.2 (*Secret Information Bulletin No. 22*, p. 78–30). C.T.F. 77 says the strike arrived over the retreating enemy about 1330 and delivered its first attack about 1400 (op. cit., p. 78–25), but his authority for this statement is not known. The strike reported contact with the enemy at 1430 (time of receipt) (*U.S.S. " Wasp ", Action Report*, M.0715/45, p. 32). The Plan in *Secret Information Bulletin No. 22*, p. 78–4, states the attack took place at 1300.

[7] *Kitkun Bay's* aircraft, referred to in Note 2, p. 98.

[8] 4 ½-ton bomb hits on *Yamato* (battleship), 4 ¼-ton on a *Kongo* battleship, 1 ½-ton and 1 ¼-ton on *Nagato* (battleship), as well as 3 rocket hits, 4 ¼-ton and 1 ½-ton on unidentified battleships, 2 ¼-ton on one *Nachi* (heavy cruiser) and 1 ½-ton on the other *Nachi*, 1 ¼-ton on a *Tone* heavy cruiser, 1 ½-ton and 4 ¼-ton on an unidentified heavy cruiser, 3 ¼-ton on the *Noshiro* (light cruiser), 1 ¼-ton on each of four destroyers ; one Zeke was shot down (M.0411/45, *C.T.G. 38.1, Action Report*, p. 23). Cincpac, *Report*, p. 98 gives only one bomb hit on a *Nagato*.

two bombers on take-off, one fighter missing, three bombers shot down, two 25th Oct. torpedo aircraft landed in the water short of fuel ; but some of the air crews were saved.[1]

71. The Centre Force retreats through San Bernardino Strait, Sunset, 25th October

None of the many air attacks on the Japanese Centre Force as it steered north—the *Yamato* sustained 11—caused serious damage. Ships' bulges were perforated and all the heavy ships were trailing oil, but all of them could maintain 20 knots, increasing to 24 when aircraft appeared ; and all were battle worthy.[2]

Although he was proceeding north, Vice-Admiral Kurita was not prepared to prejudice his chances of retreat. One thought was clearly over-riding—that he must be at San Bernardino at sunset so as to get through the Strait and as far west as possible during the night. Two tankers awaited him in the Sulu Sea and a third was stationed at Koron in Mindanao Strait. Now that he had abandoned the decision to enter Leyte Gulf with its line of retirement through Surigao Strait, the necessity for replenishing his fuel supply before returning to Brunei chained him to the San Bernardino Strait. Had he been able to attack the invasion forces the question of fuel would have been disregarded, but matters now were different.[3]

His situation had not improved. During his run north he had received information that Vice-Admiral Nishimura had met with disaster. The messages were very short and gave no details ; the source, apparently a destroyer, had not actually seen the battle but had sighted fires.[4]

Admiral Toyoda sent no orders.

From some source, though not from Vice-Admiral Ozawa himself, he had heard that the latter had become heavily engaged and the flagship was damaged and the flag was going to be shifted to another ship ;[5] though information of the extent of the damage to the Northern Force was not vouchsafed to him. He hoped that as the result of this engagement and the calls for help from the force he had been chasing this morning he would find an American force in his path

[1] These are the figures given by C.T.G. 38.1 in his *Report*, M.0411/45, pp. 22–23. They do not agree with the figures given in Cincpac, *Report*, p. 98, which are as follows : " Ten bombers and one fighter were missing at the end of the day, two bombers and one torpedo aircraft made water landings due to shortage of gas, and eight bombers landed at Tacloban Field on Leyte, with one bomber landing at Dulag Field. Due to the roughness of the Tacloban strip, two planes received damage in landing."

[2] N.I.D. 10056/45, *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. B.S. No. 47), Nav. No. 9*, p. 47–19. The damaged *Kumano*, which could only steam 16 knots, had presumably left for San Bernardino Strait before the 2nd Fleet turned north.

[3] Op cit., p. 47–21. With regard to entering Leyte Gulf he said : " There was no consideration for fuel. There was no consideration for how to get home " (p. 47–17).

[4] Vice-Admiral Kurita stated that he did not hear the result of the Battle of Surigao Strait until about 11 o'clock of the following day, but it seems clear that " the following day " refers to the 25th and that he must have received the news very soon after his turn north on 25th.

[5] The time of receipt of this message is not given. Captain Ohmae, Chief of Staff to Vice-Admiral Ozawa, stated that they changed flagships from the *Zuikaku* to the *Oyodo* about 1000, after the first attack (N.I.D. 10080/45, p. 150–7), but it seems clear that Vice-Admiral Kurita did not receive the message until he was proceeding north although he could not remember at what time he received it. He makes some observations on time lag in the passage of messages in N.I.D. 10056/45, pp. 47–25, 26. The defect in the *Zuikaku's* wireless, which was not discovered until " later," must also be borne in mind.

25th Oct. before he reached 13° 20′ N., the critical latitude from which he did not wish to stray too far northward and prejudice his passage of the San Bernardino Strait at dark, unless he could before sunset find and attack the enemy, when he would cease to consider his own retreat.

As regards fighting trim he was fairly well placed, though his losses had been severe. His ships were low on fuel but had sufficient ammunition left to fight a fleet action.[1] Of his five battleships he had lost one of the two most powerful, the *Musashi*, sunk by air attack on the 24th, but of the nine heavy cruisers which left Brunei Bay with his fleet there remained with him only one, the *Haguro*.

His hopes of meeting an American force were raised by sighting, in latitude about 12° 30′ N., a Japanese aircraft flying over; but they were not fulfilled, and consequently he rounded Cape Espiritu Santo and entered San Bernardino Strait.[2] He passed through the Strait at 2130.

72. Two Fast Battleships Sent in Pursuit

Vice-Admiral McCain launched no more strikes on 25th. At 1557 Admiral Halsey ordered him to rendezvous at 0600 next day in 12° N. 126° E. with Task Group 38.2, consisting of the three carriers and eight destroyers,[3] under Rear-Admiral Bogan which had come south with the bulk of the Heavy Striking Force[4] when Admiral Halsey, influenced either by the calls for help of the escort carriers off Samar or having decided that he could leave the destruction of the enemy Northern Force to the carriers and light forces of Task Groups 38.3 and 38.4, turned south at 1115 25th.

After the turn south, Admiral Halsey proceeded at 20 knots until 1345 when the destroyers commenced fuelling from the battleships and carriers, completing at 1621.[5] His two fastest battleships, the *New Jersey* (his own

[1] N.I.D. 10056/45, p. 47–17.

[2] *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22.* Composite Plot, p. 78–28. It was stated by Captain Fuchida, Air Staff Officer to the C.-in-C. Combined Fleet that " Kurita's retreat was on orders from Toyoda " (N.I.D. 10073/45, p. 113–10). There is no support whatever for this statement in Vice-Admiral Kurita's interrogation, though Captain Ohmae, Chief of Staff to Vice-Admiral Ozawa states that Admiral Toyoda " gave the general orders to attack and return " *in an operation like this*, but he does not specify that he did so in the present operation and the weight of evidence is against it (N.I.D. 10080/45, p. 36–9). Commander Otano, Staff Officer (Operations) in the Second Fleet stated that Vice-Admiral Kurita's decision to turn west through San Bernardino Strait was determined by a despatch received from Vice-Admiral Ozawa about 1700 for assistance against the Third Fleet in the north, but Kurita decided to retreat because his fuel was running low and he did not consider his force to be ready for a night action on account of damage received during the day (N.I.D. 10086/45, p. 170–7). Ozawa denied ever asking Kurita for help, but he stated that at about dusk on the 25th he informed the Second Fleet he was turning back to support one of his destroyers which was being attacked by gunfire by American forces. When he came to the scene, he could not see any American force, though the destroyer was there carrying out rescue work; accordingly he reversed his course and went north again. It seems probable that this message was indeed the determining factor in Kurita's decision; for since he knew nothing of Admiral Halsey's return south he would now believe himself to be faced, at this late hour of day, with a run of over 400 miles before meeting the American Third Fleet.

[3] *Intrepid*, carrier (flagship), *Cabot*, light carrier, *Independence*, light carrier, Destroyer Squadron 53 less *Benham* (*see* Appendix D).

[4] Viz., Task Force 34 less the heavy cruisers *Wichita* and *New Orleans*, light cruisers *Santa Fe* and *Mobile*, and Destroyer Squadron 50.

[5] M.03212/45, *C.T.F. 34, Action Report*, p. 11. M.04755/45, *U.S.S. " Alabama ", Action Report*, p. 2, says the destroyers were fuelled between noon and 1600. *U.S.S. " South Dakota ", Action Report*, M.0303/45, p. 24 states that she commenced fuelling destroyers at 1316 and that Task Group 34.5 was formed at 1530.

flagship) and the *Iowa*, three light cruisers, the *Vincennes*, *Miami* and *Biloxi*, 25th Oct. and Destroyer Squadron 52 he now (1620/25) formed into a special Task Group 34.5[1] under Rear-Admiral Badger (U.S.S. *Iowa* flagship) which increased speed to 28 knots[2] in an attempt to catch and destroy the retreating enemy before they reached the San Bernardino Strait, since it was doubtful whether Task Group 38.2 could arrive in time. His doubts were all too well founded, for it was not until 1825, half an hour after sunset, that the night carrier *Independence* was able to launch a long range search and attack.

Unfortunately, the Japanese Centre Force had re-entered San Bernardino Strait before Admiral Halsey's arrival. A sweep of the approaches was made, and thence along the coast of Samar. At 0026 on 26th an enemy straggler, on fire, was encountered and was reported to have been sunk at 0146 by destroyer and cruiser gunfire and a half salvo of torpedoes from the destroyer *Miller*, being identified as either a large destroyer or a cruiser.[3]

73. Third Fleet Air Strikes, 26th October

As instructed by the Commander Third Fleet, Vice-Admiral McCain steered 26th Oct. during the night for the appointed rendezvous with Task Group 38.2, which was sighted at 0450 on 26th.

At dawn, about an hour later, launching of Combat Air Patrol, search, and the first strike commenced, for the triple purpose of a fighter sweep of the Visayas, a search of the Philippines to the west and south-west, and a composite strike of aircraft carrying torpedoes and bombs[4] against the enemy main body, which was expected to be found near the east coast of Mindoro. Each carrier was instructed to expedite the departure of its strike, each air group moving out separately as soon as it had made rendezvous.

At 0810 the strike leader reported the enemy, consisting of four battleships, two heavy cruisers, two light cruisers and 10 destroyers[5] in Tablas Straits, 10 miles north-west of the north tip of Panay Island. The second strike was launched immediately, and a third strike of 25 aircraft was sent out at 1245. This strike, composed of B.24 aircraft armed with heavy bombs made no hits nor any appreciably damaging near misses.[6]

Task Group 38.2 also launched strikes throughout the day.[7]

In all, 174 aircraft reached the targets, dropping 58 tons of bombs, 45 torpedoes, and 82 rockets.[8] The light cruiser *Noshiro* was hit and immobilised

[1] *See* Appendix C.

[2] M.0128/45, *U.S.S. " Massachusetts ", Action Report*, p. 3. But M.03212/45, *C.T.F. 34, Action Report*, p. 11, states that Task Group 34.5 proceeded at 24 knots for San Bernardino Strait, course 195°.

[3] This ship cannot be identified. The list in the *Final Official Report* by Fleet Admiral E. J. King, C.-in-C., U.S. Fleet and C.N.O. makes no mention of any ship sunk by Task Group 34.5.

[4] *" Wasp ", Action Report* (M.0715/45, p. 7). But C.T.G. 38.1 in his *Action Report* (M.0411/45, p. 25) merely says " the first strike with torpedo aircraft carrying torpedoes."

[5] *Report of C.T.G. 38.1* (M.0411/45, p. 25).

[6] N.I.D. 10056/45, *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. B.S. No. 47) Nav. No. 9*, p. 47–22.

[7] The only authority for this statement is the *Action Report* of the *Massachusetts* (M.02325/45, p. 2). This report gives a good concise account of the actions in which the Third Fleet were engaged, but naturally, not all of them came under her personal observation. No reports are available from any of the carriers of Task Group 38.2.

[8] These details and those of damage inflicted are based mainly on Vice-Admiral McCain's Action Report (M.0511/45). He does not state, though it is presumed, that as Senior Officer he took charge of both task groups after making rendezvous at 0450/26, and that the details he gives cover the operations of both groups and not only of his own.

26th Oct. by two torpedoes in the first attack and was sunk by bombs in the second attack[1] at 0910 near Maniguin Island, off north-west Panay, in 11° 35′ N., 121° 45′ E. A few miles to the north-west, in 11° 40′ N., 121° 30′ a destroyer was hit at 1050 with two torpedoes and a quarter ton SAP bomb, and her bows were blown off.[2] This may have been the *Hayashimo*, which is reported to have been sunk by aircraft on this date off south-east Mindoro. Further east, the light cruiser *Kinu* and the destroyer *Uranami* was sunk on this date by carrier air attack south-west of Masbate Island, both perhaps being engaged in the reinforcement of Leyte.

Photographs showed the battleship *Yamato* hit by bombs, 10 miles off the north-west tip of Panay, and it is reported that the ship was also hit by a torpedo from one of the *Wasp's* aircraft, but the depth setting was only 10 feet and no effect was seen. Many other hits by torpedo and bomb were reported but none of them had the effect of stopping any ship permanently.[3] The survivors scattered.

Twelve Japanese aircraft were destroyed in the air during the day's operations, in addition to others destroyed on Legaspi Airfield in the south-east of Luzon.[4] The American aircraft losses were four fighters, two bombers and two torpedo aircraft shot down by A.A. and one torpedo aircraft lost operationally.

74. Air Strikes, 27th October

27th Oct. At dawn on 27th the *Essex* and *Lexington* of Task Group 38.3 which had now returned south launched air patrols and a search to the westward.

The search aircraft reported a damaged Japanese cruiser and two destroyers off the south tip of Mindoro, and at 0840 the *Essex* and *Lexington* launched a minor strike to sink them.[5] The strike aircraft could not find the cruiser, but bombed the destroyers and reported damaging one of them.[6] This was perhaps the *Fujinami*, which was sunk in this position as the result of Third Fleet air attacks on 27th[7] or the *Shiranuhi*, one of Vice-Admiral

[1] N.I.D. 10056/45, *Interrogation No. (U.S.S. B.S. No. 47) Nav. No. 9*, p. 47–22.

[2] Vice-Admiral Kurita states (N.I.D. 10056/45, p. 47–22) " Something happened to the *stern* [H/S italics] of one of the destroyers, but I don't know what," which may refer to this incident.

[3] The following additional claims are also made, M.0411/45, *C.T.G. 38.1 Action Report*, p. 25 : One seaplane tender blown up after being bombed by *Hancock* in 11° 05′ N., 123° 05′ E. (north entrance to Guimaras Strait)—this ship cannot be identified ; a *Kumano* heavy cruiser seen exploding and burning fiercely after two torpedo and five half-ton bomb hits at 1030 ; an unidentified heavy cruiser dead in the water, hit by two torpedoes on the starboard side ; the *Nagato* hit by one torpedo at same place and time as *Yamato* ; group of five destroyers attacked in 12° N., 120° 45′ E. (Mindoro Strait) at 1515 and three hit with bombs. There are also the following undated claims :—" One heavy cruiser or battleship went on alone [presumably after the first attack off North-West Panay] and was hit at 12° N., 121° E. One heavy cruiser was hit and left at 11° 55′ N., 121° 40′ E. and later believed sunk." The composite plot in *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–28 shows a destroyer sunk at 1100/26 in 11° 30′ N., 124° E. This vessel cannot be identified and the claim is considered to be incorrect.

[4] 13° 09′ N., 123° 45′ E.

[5] Cincpac, *Report*, p. 99, states, however, that by the afternoon of 26th the retiring enemy ships had moved beyond the range of strikes from Third Fleet carriers, and that Commander, Third Fleet considered that the action with the enemy fleet terminated at 2400 on 26th.

[6] *U.S.S. " Santa Fe ", Action Report*, 27th Oct. (M.02314/45, p. 1).

[7] *See* Appendix H.

Shima's (Fifth Fleet) destroyers, which was sunk on the same day by carrier aircraft off Panay where she had gone to assist in the rescue of the crew of the light cruiser *Kinu* sunk on the previous day. 27th Oct.

The remaining survivors of the Japanese Second Fleet, many of them damaged, made their way to Brunei Bay. The heavy ships proceeded direct ; the destroyers *Isokaze* and *Yukikaze* were re-fuelled at Dangerous Ground from the *Nagato* and *Haruna* whilst the *Hamanami, Kishinami, Akishimo, Shimakaze* and *Urakaze* fuelled at Koron en route.

About noon Rear-Admiral Sherman sent a fighter bomber sweep over Manila to sink damaged ships reported there.[1] Two Japanese heavy cruisers, one light cruiser and four destroyers were visually sighted in Manila on 29th October though some of these may have been the damaged ships sighted in Manila Bay on 23rd and 24th ;[2] and one damaged *Tone* class heavy cruiser was seen on 3rd November in Bacuit Bay, Palawan.

One of the three tankers which took part in the operation, that stationed at Koron escaped to the north-west after sustaining one hit in air attack. One of the two in the Sulu Sea was sunk in Balabac Strait by submarine torpedo : the other, though also damaged by submarine torpedo escaped in Paitan Bay, North Borneo (06° 45′ N., 117° 20′ E.).

75. Losses of the Centre Force. (*See Appendix H*)

Of the five battleships, 10 heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and 15 destroyers which constituted the Japanese Centre Force when it sailed from Brunei Bay, only four battleships, five heavy cruisers and 13 destroyers succeeded in escaping from the scene of battle, most of the important units considerably damaged. Losses included the *Musashi*, one of the two most modern battleships, possibly the two greatest and most heavily armed ships afloat ;[3] whilst the five heavy cruisers sunk and three out of action with major damage represented more than half the enemy strength in a type of which no additional ones had been added to the fleet since the commencement of hostilities.

[1] No record of any success has been found.

[2] *See* Section 21.

[3] Displacement at full load 72,800 tons, on trial 69,100 tons, and main armament 9–18·1-in. guns.

CHAPTER X

RESULTS OF THE BATTLE

76. Victory—but not annihilation

Five days of co-ordinated fighting by American submarines, Allied surface vessels and American aircraft had ended in a decisive defeat of the Japanese Fleet, though not its destruction. Apart from its losses, three battleships, four carriers, 10 cruisers[1] and eight or nine destroyers,[2] almost every important unit was damaged to a greater or less degree, so that the fleet was crippled and henceforth became strictly auxiliary.[3] For the Japanese naval air force, the battle spelt disaster and the beginning of the end: it became a purely defensive force relying upon a weapon of despair, the suicide bomber which had been tried out and achieved by surprise a single initial success in sinking the escort carrier *St. Lo* on 25th October. This, with the light carrier *Princeton*, a second escort carrier (the *Gambier Bay*) two destroyers, a destroyer escort, a motor torpedo boat and a submarine, constituted the total and comparatively insignificant Allied losses in the five days' fighting.

The battle sealed the fate of the Philippines. For a few weeks their land-based aircraft continued to give the Japanese control of the air over Leyte Gulf. Under this cover they ran in a number of convoys of reinforcements which enabled resistance to be prolonged. But any serious interruption of the Allied operations was henceforth out of the question.

Nevertheless, the failure to destroy completely the Japanese fleet was to cost the Allies a vast effort in the months to come, and it was not until July of the following year that the final seal was set upon the work begun at the Battle for Leyte Gulf.

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[1] Including the *Kinu* (*see* Appendix H, note 2).

[2] This figure includes the *Wakaba* (*see* App. H) and *Uranami* (*see* Sec. 73) and the *Fujinami* which was sunk on 27th October.

[3] "There was no further use assigned to surface vessels with exception of some special ships. Those exceptions were *Yamato* and destroyers and submarines and a few cruisers." Vice-Admiral Ozawa, *Interrogation*.

APPENDIX A

Organization of U.S. Third Fleet until 0240, 25th October

(Admiral W. F. Halsey, Jr., Commander Third Fleet, U.S.S. *New Jersey*)

TASK FORCE 38

(First Carrier Task Force, Pacific Fleet)
(Vice-Admiral Marc A. Mitscher, U.S.S. *Lexington*)

Task Group 38.1

(Vice-Admiral John S. McCain)
(Commander 2nd Carrier Task Force, Pacific Fleet)

Task Unit 38.1.1 (Carrier Unit) (Vice-Admiral McCain). Carrier Air Group 14.	*Wasp* (F)	Aircraft—36 F6F and 36 SB2C and 19 TBF or 150 FM, or 120 F6F or F4U or 52 F7F.
	Hornet	
	Hancock[1]	
	Cowpens	Aircraft—24 F6F and 9 TBF or 42 FM or 36 F6F or F4U.
	Monterey	
Task Unit 38.1.2 (Support Unit) (Rear-Admiral Wiltsie)	*Boston* (F)[2]	9–8-in. guns (triple). 12–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns.
	Oakland	12–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns.
	San Diego	16–5-in. A.A./L.A. guns.
	Chester .. .. .. (Rear-Admiral A. E. Smith)	9–8-in. guns (triple). 8–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns.
	Salt Lake City	10–8-in. guns (2 twin, 2 triple).
	Pensacola	8–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns.
Task Unit 38.1.3 (Screen Unit)	Destroyer Squadron 46[3] ..	(7 destroyers).
	Destroyer Squadron 12 (part)	(7 destroyers).

Task Group 38.2

(Rear-Admiral Bogan, ComCarDiv. 4, U.S.S. *Intrepid*)

Task Unit 38.2.1	*Intrepid* (F)	Aircraft—as *Wasp*.
	Cabot	Aircraft—as *Cowpens*.
	Independence	
Task Unit 38.2.2	*Iowa* .. .. .. (Rear-Admiral O.C. Badger)	9–16-in. guns (triple). 20–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns.
	New Jersey .. .. .. (Admiral W. F. Halsey, Jr.) (Commander Third Fleet)	
Task Unit 38.2.3	*Vincennes* .. .. .. (Rear-Admiral F. E. M. Whiting, ComCruDiv 14)	12–6-in. guns (triple). 12–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns.
	Biloxi	
	Miami	
Task Unit 38.2.4	Destroyer Squadron 52 ..	(8 destroyers).
	Destroyer Squadron 53 (less *Benham*).	(8 destroyers).

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[1] Left Task Group 26th October and rejoined Task Group 38.2.

[2] Rejoined 24th October.

[3] The organisation of the Third Fleet destroyer flotillas is given in Appendix D.

APPENDIX A—*continued*

Task Group 38.3

(Rear-Admiral F. K. Sherman, ComCarDiv. 1, U.S.S. *Essex*)

Task Unit 38.3.1	*Essex* (F)	Aircraft—as *Wasp*.
	Lexington (FF)	Aircraft—as *Wasp*.
	(Vice-Admiral M. A. Mitscher, Commander First Carrier Task Force).	Aircraft—as *Wasp*.
	Langley	Aircraft—as *Monterey*.
	Princeton	Aircraft—as *Monterey*.
Task Unit 38.3.2	*Massachusetts*	9–16-in. guns (triple).
	(Rear-Admiral G. B. Davis)	20–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns.
	South Dakota	9–16-in. guns (triple).
	(Rear-Admiral E. W. Hanson)	16–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns.
Task Unit 38.3.3	*Santa Fé*	12–6-in. guns (triple).
	(Rear-Admiral L. T. du Bose)	
	Birmingham[1]	12–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns.
	Mobile	12–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns.
	Reno	12–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns. 2 Q.R.T. (21-in.).
Task Unit 38.3.4	Destroyer Division 99	(6 destroyers).[2]
	Destroyer Squadron 55	(8 destroyers).[3]

Task Group 38.4

(Rear-Admiral R. E. Davison, ComCarDiv. 2, U.S.S. *Franklin*)

Task Unit 38.4.1	*Franklin* (F)	Aircraft—as *Wasp*.
	Enterprise	Aircraft—36 F6F and 36 SB2C and 19 TBF or 120 FM, or 96 F6F or F4U.
	Belleau Wood	Aircraft—as *Monterey*.
	San Jacinto	Aircraft—as *Monterey*.
Task Unit 38.4.2	*Washington*	9–16-in. guns (triple).
	(Vice-Admiral W. A. Lee, Jr., Commander Battleships Pacific Fleet).	
	Alabama	20–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns.
Task Unit 38.4.3	*Wichita*	9–8-in. guns (triple).
	(Rear-Admiral C. T. Joy).	
	New Orleans	8–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns.
Task Unit 38.4.4	Destroyer Squadron 6	(8 destroyers).
	Destroyer Division 24 (part)	(3 destroyers).
	Destroyer Division 100	(4 destroyers).

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[1] Left for Ulithi with Task Group 38.3.6, p.m. 24th October.

[2] One left for Ulithi with Task Group 38.3.6, p.m. 24th October.

[3] Two left for Ulithi with Task Group 38.3.6, p.m. 24th October.

APPENDIX B

TASK FORCE 34

(Heavy Striking Force)

(Formed 0430 25th October)

(Vice-Admiral W. A. Lee, Jr., O.T.C.)

Task Group 34 (Battle Line)

(Vice-Admiral Lee)

Task Unit 34.1.1 (BatDiv. 7)	*Iowa*.
	New Jersey.
Task Unit 34.1.2 (BatDiv. 8)	*Massachusetts*.
	Washington (F).
Task Unit 34.1.3 (BatDiv. 9)	*South Dakota*.
	Alabama.

Task Group 34.2 (Right Flank)

(Rear-Admiral F. E. M. Whiting)

Task Unit 34.2.2 (CruDiv. 14)	*Vincennes* (F).
	Miami.
	Biloxi.
Task Units 34.2.3, 34.2.4	Destroyers :— *Tingey, Owen, Miller, The Sullivans, Hickox, Hunt, Lewis Hancock, Marshall*.

Task Group 34.3 (Centre)

(Rear-Admiral C. T. Joy)

Task Unit 34.3.1 (CruDiv. 6)	*Wichita* (F).
	New Orleans.
Task Unit 34.3.3	Destroyers :— *Cogswell, Caperton, Ingersoll, Knapp*.

Task Group 34.4 (Left Flank)

(Rear-Admiral L. T. du Bose)

Task Unit 34.4.2 (CruDiv. 13)	*Santa Fe* (F).
	Mobile.
Task Unit 34.4.3	Destroyers :— *C.K. Bronson, Cotten, Dortch, Healy, Patterson, Bagley*.

APPENDIX C

SPECIAL TASK GROUP 34.5

(Formed 1620 25th October)

(Rear-Admiral O. C. Badger, U.S.S. *Iowa*, C.T.G. 34.5)

Battleships	*Iowa*.
	New Jersey.
Cruisers	*Vincennes*.
	Biloxi.
	Miami.
Destroyers	*Tingey*.
	Owen.
	Miller.
	The Sullivans.
	Hickox.
	Hunt.
	Lewis Hancock.
	Marshall.

APPENDIX D

DESTROYER FLOTILLAS
of
U.S. Third Fleet during Battle for Leyte Gulf
(omitting absent vessels)

Squadron		
6	*Maury*	4–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 4 Q.R.T. (sided)
	Gridley	
	Helm	
	McCall	
	Mugford	
	Ralph Talbot	
	Ingersoll	5–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 P.R.T. (C.L.)
	Knapp	
12	*Case*	4–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 3 Q.R.T. (1 C.L., 2 sided)
	Cassin	
	Downes	
	Dunlap	
	Fanning	
	Cummings	
	Farenholt	4–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 1 P.R.T. (C.L.)
	Wilkes (1)	4–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 P.R.T. (C.L.)
	Nicholson (1)	
	Swanson (1)	
46	*Izard*	5–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 P.R.T. (C.L.)
	Conner	
	McCalla	4–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 1 P.R.T. (C.L.)
	Brown	5–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 P.R.T. (C.L.)
	Cowell	
	Woodworth	4–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 1 P.R.T. (C.L.)
	Grayson	4–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 P.R.T. (C.L.)
50	*Clarence K. Bronson*	5–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 P.R.T. (C.L.)
	Cotten	
	Dortch	
	Gatling	
	Healy	
	Porterfield	
	Cogswell	5–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 P.R.T. (C.L.)
	Caperton	
	Patterson	4–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 4 Q.R.T.
	Bagley	
52	*Tingey*	5–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 P.R.T. (C.L.)
	Owen	
	Miller	
	The Sullivans	
	Hickox	
	Hunt	
	Lewis Hancock	
	Marshall	
53	*Cushing*	
	Colahan	
	Halsey Powell	
	Uhlmaun	
	Yarnall	
	Twining	
	Stockham	
	Wedderburn	
55	*Callaghan*	
	Cassin Young	
	Irwin	
	Preston	
	Laws	
	Longshaw	
	Morrison	

[1] These three destroyers were with Task Group 38·4.

APPENDIX E

Organization of Tactical Units of U.S. Seventh Fleet During Battle for Leyte Gulf
(Vice-Admiral T. C. Kinkaid, Commander Seventh Fleet)

Task Force 77 (Covering Force)
(Vice-Admiral T. C. Kinkaid, C.T.F.77)

Task Group 77.2 (Fire Support and Bombardment Group)
(Rear-Admiral J. B. Oldendorf, O.T.C., U.S.S. *Louisville*)

Battle Line

Task Unit 77.2.1 (Rear-Admiral G. L. Weyler)

BatDiv. 3 (modified)	*Mississippi* (F) (Capt. H. J. Redfield)	12–14-in. guns (triple)
BatDiv. 4 (modified)	*Maryland* (Capt. T. D. Ruddock)	8–16-in. guns (twin)
	West Virginia	
Task Unit 77.2.2 (BatDiv. 2)	*Tennessee*	12–14-in. guns (triple)
	California	
	Pennsylvania (Capt. G. F. Martin)	
Destroyer Division X	*Aulick*	5–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 P.R.T. (C.L.)
	Cony	
	Sigourney	
	Claxton	
	Thorn	4–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 1 P.R.T. (C.L.)
	Welles	

Left Flank Force

CruDiv. 4 (modified)	*Louisville* (FF) (Rear-Admiral J. B. Oldendorf).	9–8-in. guns (triple)
	Portland (Capt. T. G. W. Settle)	8–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns
	Minneapolis	
CruDiv. 12 (modified)	*Denver* (Rear-Admiral Hayler)	12–6-in. guns (triple)
	Columbia	12–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns
Destroyer Squadron 56 (modified)	*Newcomb*	5–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 P.R.T. (C.L.)
	Leutze	
	Bennion	
	Heywood L. Edwards	
	Richard P. Leary	
	Robinson	
	Albert W. Grant	
	Bryant	
	Halford	

Right Flank Force

Task Group 77.3 (Close Covering Group)
(Rear-Admiral R. S. Berkey, U.S.S. *Phœnix*)

CruDiv. 15 (modified)	*Phœnix*	15–6-in. guns (triple)
	Boise	8–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns
H.M.A.S.	*Shropshire* (Capt. C. A. G. Nichols, M.V.O., R.N.)[1].	8–8-in. guns (twin), 8–4-in. guns.
Destroyer Division 47	*Hutchins* (ComDesRon. 24)	5–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 P.R.T. (C.L.)
	Bache	
	Daly	
	Beale	
	Killen	
plus H.M.A.S.	*Arunta* (Commander A. E. Buchanan, R.A.N.)[1]	6–4·7-in. guns, 2–4-in. guns, 1 Q.R.T. (C.L.)

[1] Granted D.S.O. for services during the battle.

APPENDIX E—*continued.*

Special Attack Group 79.11
(Destroyer Squadron 54)

Eastern Attack Group (DesDiv. 107)		*Western Attack Group* (Des.Div. 108)	
Remey, *McGowan*, *Melvin*	5–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 P.R.T. (C.L.)	5–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 P.R.T. (C.L.)	*Monssen*, *McDermut*

Patrol between Homonhon I and Dinagat I.
McNair, *Mertz* — 5–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 P.R.T. (C.L.)

Task Group 77.4
(Rear-Admiral T. L. Sprague, U.S.S. *Sangamon*)

Northernmost Station CarGrp.
(Rear-Admiral C. A. F. Sprague, U.S.S. *Fanshaw Bay*)

Task Unit 77.4.3

Task Unit 77.4.31	Escort carriers	*Fanshaw Bay* (F), *St Lo* (Capt. F. J. McKenna), *Kalinin Bay*, *White Plains*	About 30 aircraft each.
Task Unit 77.4.32 (Rear-Admiral Ofstie)	Escort carriers	*Kitkun Bay* (F), *Gambier Bay* (Capt. W. V. R. Vieweg)	
Task Unit 77.4.33	Destroyers	*Hoel* (Commander W. D. Thomas), *Johnston*, *Heerman*	5–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 P.R.T. (C.L.)
	Destroyer escorts.	*Samuel B. Roberts*, *Dennis*, *John C. Butler*, *Raymond*	2–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 1 T.R.T.

Central Station CarGrp
(Rear-Admiral T. L. Sprague, U.S.S. *Sangamon*)

Task Unit 77.4.1

Task Unit 77.4.11	Escort carriers	*Sangamon* (F), *Suwannee*, *Chenango*, *Santee*	About 30 aircraft each
Task Unit 77.4.12 (Rear-Admiral G. R. Henderson)	Escort carriers	*Saginaw Bay* (F), *Petrof Bay*	
Task Unit 77.4.13[1]	Destroyers	*McCord*, *Trathen*, *Hazlewood*	5–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 P.R.T. (C.L.)
	Destroyer escorts.	*Richard S. Bull*, *Richard M. Rowell*, *Eversole*	2–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 1 T.R.T.

[1] Based on Cincpac, *Report*, p. 88. But *Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–5, states there were five destroyer escorts in this unit, though the names are not known.

APPENDIX E—*continued.*

Southernmost Station CarGrp.
(Rear-Admiral F. B. Stump, U.S.S. *Natoma Bay*)

Task Unit 77.4.2

Task Unit 77.4.21	Escort carriers	*Natoma Bay* (F), *Manila Bay*	
Task Unit 77.4.22 (Rear-Admiral W. D. Sample).		*Marcus Island*, *Kadashan Bay*, *Savo Island*, *Ommaney Bay*	
Task Unit 77.4.23	Destroyers	*Haggard*, *Franks*, *Hailey*	5–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 P.R.T. (C.L.)
	Destroyer escorts.	*Richard W. Suesens*, *Abercrombie*, *Le Roy Wilson*, *Walter C. Wann*	2–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 1 T.R.T.

APPENDIX F

ORGANIZATION OF THE JAPANESE FORCES AT THE BATTLE FOR LEYTE GULF

Chain of Command

COMBINED FLEET
(Admiral Toyoda—flag ashore in Japan)

MAIN BODY OF MOBILE FORCE OR ATTACK GROUP (KdMB)
(Third Fleet)
Vice-Admiral Jisaburo Ozawa)

3rd Carrier Squadron
((Vice-Admiral Ozawa)

4th Carrier Squadron
(Rear-Admiral Chiaki Matsuda)

31st Destroyer Flotilla
43rd, 41st, 61st Destroyer Groups
(Rear-Admiral Hyotaro Edo)

FIRST DIVISION ATTACK FORCE (1–YB)
(Second Fleet)
(Vice-Admiral Takeo Kurita)

C. Force or 3rd Night Combat Unit.
(Vice-Admiral Shoji Nishimura).
2nd Battle Squadron

4th Destroyer Division

1st and 2nd Night Combat Units.
(Vice-Admiral T. Kurita)
1st Battle Squadron
(Vice-Admiral Matome Ugaki).
3rd Battle Squadron
(Vice-Admiral Yoshio Suzuki).
4th Cruiser Squadron
(Vice-Admiral T. Kurita)
5th Cruiser Squadron
(Vice-Admiral Shimataro Hashimoto).
7th Cruiser Squadron
(Vice-Admiral Kazutaka Shiraishi).
2nd Destroyer Flotilla
(Rear-Admiral Mikio Hayakawa).
10th Destroyer Flotilla
(Rear-Admiral Susumu Kimura).

Vice-Admiral Mikawa
(C.-in-C. S.W. Area Fleet, Manila)

SECOND DIVERSION ATTACK FORCE
(Fifth Fleet)
(Vice-Admiral Kiyohide Shima)
21st Cruiser Squadron

1st Destroyer Flotilla
(Rear-Admiral Masafuku Kimura)

APPENDIX F—*continued.*

Organization of the Fleets, 23rd—26th October

NORTHERN FORCE

3rd Carrier Squadron—Carrier *Zuikaku* (Fleet Flagship)
Light Carrier *Chitose*
Light Carrier *Chiyoda*
Light Carrier *Zuiho*

4th Carrier Squadron—Battleship carriers	*Hyuga* (Flagship), *Ise*	8–14-in. guns, 16–5·5-in. guns, 8–5·1-in. H.A. guns
21st Cruiser Squadron (2nd Division). Light Cruisers	*Tama*	7–5·5-in. guns, 3–3-in. H.A. guns, 6 Q.R.T. (24-in.).
	Oyodo	6–6·1-in. guns, 2–4·7-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 1 Q.R.T.
11th Destroyer Flotilla Light Cruiser	*Isudzu*	7–5·5-in. guns, 3–3-in. H.A. guns, 6 Q.R.T. (24-in.).
Destroyers	*Hatsutsuki*, *Wakatsuki*, *Akitsuki*, *Shimotsuki*, *Kuwa*	8–4-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 1 Q.R.T. (24-in.).
	Maki	3–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 1 Q.R.T. (24-in.).
	Sugi, *Kiri*	(? Armament)

CENTRE FORCE

Note.—Ships marked * were sunk, or damaged and turned back before reaching San Bernardino Strait, and consequently did not take part in the Battle off Samar. Certain destroyers escorted the damaged ships and only 11 took part in the Battle off Samar.

1st Battle Squadron	Battleships	*Yamato* (Flagship), *Musashi**	9–18·1-in. guns, 12–6-in., 12–5-in. A.A. guns.
		Nagato	8–16-in. guns, 18–5·5-in. guns, 8–5·1-in. H.A. guns.
3rd Battle Squadron	Battleships	*Kongo* (Flagship), *Haruna*	8–14-in., 14–5·9-in. guns.
4th Cruiser Squadron		*Atago** (Fleet Flagship), *Takao**	10–7·87-in. guns (twin turrets).
		*Maya**, *Chokai*	4–4·7-in. H.A. guns, 4 Q.R.T. (24-in.).
5th Cruiser Squadron (less *Mogami*).		*Myoko** (Flagship), *Haguro*	10–7·87-in. guns (twin turrets).
			8–5·1-in. H.A. guns, 4 Q.R.T. (24-in.).
7th Cruiser Squadron		*Kumano* (Flagship), *Suzuya*	10–7·87-in. guns (twins).
			8–5·1-in. H.A. guns, 4 Q.R.T. (24-in.).
		Chikuma, *Tone*	8–7·87-in. guns (twins).
			8–5·1-in. H.A. guns (twin mountings). 4 Q.R.T. (24-in.)
2nd Destroyer Flotilla (less *Shigure, Kiyoshimo*).	Light cruiser	*Noshiro* (leader)	6–6·1-in. guns, 2–4·7-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 1 Q.R.T.
	2nd Destroyer Division.	*Hayashimo*, *Akishimo*	6–5-in. guns, 2 Q.R.T. (24-in.).

APPENDIX F—*continued.*

2nd Destroyer Flotilla (less *Shigure, Kiyoshimo*—contd.	31st Destroyer Division.	*Asashimo*, *Kishinami*, *Okinami*, *Naganami*	6–5-in. guns, 2 Q.R.T. (24-in.).
	32nd Destroyer Division.	*Hamanami*, *Fujinami*	6–5-in. guns, 2 P.R.T. (24-in.).
		Shimakaze	6–5-in. guns, 3 P.R.T. (24-in.).
10th Destroyer Flotilla (less 61st, 41st, 4th Destroyer Divisions, plus *Nowake*).	Light cruiser	*Yahagi* (leader)	6–6·1-in. guns (twins), 2–4·7-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 1 Q.R.T.
	Destroyers	*Isokaze*, *Urakaze*, *Hamakaze*, *Yukikaze*, *Kiyoshimo*, *Nowake*	6–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 Q.R.T. (24-in.).

SOUTHERN FORCE

C Force

2nd Battle Squadron	Battleships	*Yamashiro* (Flagship), *Fuso*	12–14-in. guns.
	Cruiser	*Mogami* [1]	10–7·87-in., 8–5·1-in. guns.
4th Destroyer Division (less *Nowake*).		*Michisio*, *Yamagumo*, *Asagumo*	6–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 Q.R.T. (24-in.).
	Destroyer	*Shigure*	5–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 Q.R.T. (24-in.).

Fifth Fleet

21st Cruiser Squadron		*Nachi* (Fleet Flagship), *Ashigara*	10–7·87-in. guns, 4 Q.R.T. (24-in.).
1st Destroyer Flotilla	Light cruiser	*Abukuma* (leader)	7·5·5-in. guns, 3–3-in. H.A. guns, 6 Q.R.T. (24-in.).
	18th Destroyer Division.	*Shiranuhi*, *Kasumi*	6–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 2 Q.R.T. (24-in.).
	7th Destroyer Division.	*Ushio*, *Akebono*	6–5-in. H.A./L.A. guns, 3 T.R.T. (24-in.).

APPENDIX G

LIST OF U.S. SHIPS SUNK OR DAMAGED [2]

(A) Sunk

Ship	*Details of Sinking*
Third Fleet	
Princeton (light carrier)	24th October east of Polillo I. by air attack.
Seventh Fleet	
Gambier Bay (escort carrier)	25th October, east of Samar I, by gunfire.
St. Lo (escort carrier)	25th October, east of Samar I., by air attack.
Hoel (destroyer)	25th October, east of Samar I., by gunfire.
Johnston (destroyer)	25th October, east of Samar I., by gunfire.
Roberts (destroyer escort)	25th October, east of Samar I., by gunfire.
P.T. 493 (M.T.B.)	Night 24th/25th October in Surigao Strait approaches.

[1] C.B. 1815 (October, 1944) *Particulars of Foreign War Vessels* states that *Mogami* had been reconstructed to carry a considerable number of aircraft or as an A.A. ship: present details unknown. *Secret Information Bulletin No. 22*, p. 78–45 states that after being badly damaged at Midway, *Mogami* was virtually rebuilt, had her after turrets removed and an aircraft handling deck constructed aft.

[2] The two British ships engaged suffered no damage.

APPENDIX G—*continued.*

Ship	*Details of Sinking*
(A) Sunk—*contd.*	
	Submarine
Darter	Ran ashore 23rd October in Palawan Passage, abandoned and destroyed 24th October.
(B) Damaged	**Third Fleet**
Franklin (carrier)	Listed as damaged in *Secret Information Bulletin No. 22*, p. 78–8. No details forthcoming.
Belleau Wood (light carrier) ..	
Birmingham (light cruiser) ..	Damaged whilst assisting *Princeton*, 24th October.
Morrison (destroyer)	
Irwin (destroyer)	
	Seventh Fleet
Fanshaw Bay (escort carrier) ..	Damaged by gunfire 25th October, east of Samar I.
Kalinin Bay (escort carrier) ..	Damaged by gunfire and suicide air attack 25th October, east of Samar I.
White Plains (escort carrier) ..	Damaged by gunfire on 25th October, east of Samar I.
Sangamon (escort carrier) ..	Damaged by air attack 25th October, east of Siargao Is., Philippine Is.
Suwannee (escort carrier) ..	
Santee (escort carrier)	
Heerman (destroyer)	Damaged by gunfire 25th October, east of Samar I.
Dennis (destroyer escort) ..	
Albert W. Grant (destroyer) ..	Damaged by allied and Japanese gunfire night 24th/25th October in Surigao Strait.
2 M.T.B.s	Damaged by gunfire night 24th/25th October in Surigao Strait approaches.

APPENDIX H

LIST OF JAPANESE SHIPS SUNK OR DAMAGED IN THE BATTLE FOR LEYTE GULF

(A) Sunk

Northern Force

Ship	*Type*	*Date*	*Details of Sinking*
Zuikaku ..	Fleet carrier ..	25th October ..	By Third Fleet aircraft east of Luzon in 19° 20′ N., 125° 51′ E.
Zuiho ..	Light carrier ..		
Chitose ..	Light carrier ..		By Third Fleet aircraft east of Luzon in 19° 20′ N., 126° 20′ E.
Chiyoda ..	Light carrier ..	25th October ..	By Third Fleet aircraft and surface vessels east of Luzon in 18° 37′ N., 126° 45′ E.
Tama ..	Light cruiser ..	25th October ..	By U.S. S/M *Jallao* and Third Fleet aircraft whilst retiring from C. Engano area toward Japan in 21° 23′ N., 127° 19′ E.
Akitsuki ..	Destroyer ..	25th October ..	By Third Fleet aircraft or submarine east of Luzon in 20° 29′ N., 126° 36′ E.
Hatsutsuki ..	Destroyer ..	25th October ..	By Third Fleet surface ships in 20° 24′ N., 126° 20′ E.
	Centre Force		
Musashi ..	Battleship ..	24th October ..	By Third Fleet aircraft south of Mindoro in 12° 50′ N., 122° 35′ E.
Atago ..	Heavy cruiser	23rd October ..	By submarine in Palawan Passage in 9° 24′ N., 117° 11′ E.
Maya ..	Heavy cruiser	23rd October ..	By submarine in Palawan Passage in 9° 29′ N., 117° 20′ E.

APPENDIX H—*continued*

Centre Force—*continued*

Ship	*Type*	*Date*	*Details of Sinking*
Chokai ..	Heavy cruiser ..	25th October ..	By Japanese off Samar I in 11° 30′ N., 126° 30′ E. on account of action damage caused by Task Group 77.4.
Chikuma ..	Heavy cruiser ..		
Suzuya ..	Heavy cruiser	25th October ..	By aircraft of Task Group 77.4 east of Samar I. in 11° 30′ N., 126° 30′ E.
Noshiro ..	Light cruiser ..	26th October ..	By carrier aircraft North-West of Panay in 11° 35′ N., 121° 45′ E.
Nowake ..	Destroyer ..	25th October ..	By carrier aircraft during pursuit of Centre Force in 13° 00′ N., 124° 54′ E.
Hayashimo	Destroyer ..	26th October ..	By carrier aircraft south-east of Mindoro in 12° 05′ N., 121° 50′ E.
	Southern Force		
Yamashiro ..	Battleship ..	25th October ..	In Surigao Strait in 10° 25′ N., 125° 20′ E. by torpedo.
Fuso	Battleship ..	25th October ..	In Surigao Strait in 10° 25′ N., 125° 20′ E. by gunfire.
Mogami ..	Heavy cruiser ..	25th October ..	By carrier aircraft whilst escaping from Surigao Strait after damage in night action, in 9° 40′ N., 124° 50′ E.
Abukuma ..	Light cruiser ..	25th or 26th October	By attack by naval and army aircraft whilst escaping, damaged, after Battle of Surigao Strait in 9° 20′ N., 122° 30′ E.
Michisio ..	Destroyer ..	25th October.	In Battle of Surigao Strait in 10° 25′ N., 125° 20′ E.
Yamagumo ..	Destroyer ..		
Asagumo ..	Destroyer ..		

Notes.—1. Another destroyer of the Centre Force, the *Fujinami*, was sunk on 27th October by carrier aircraft south of Mindoro I. in 12° 00′ N., 122° 30′ E. whilst escaping from the battle area after the battle was concluded.

2. The following ships, apparently escorting reinforcements for Leyte were sunk on 26th October by carrier aircraft south-west of Masbate I :—*Kinu* (light cruiser) in 11° 46′ N., 123° 11′ E., *Uranami* (destroyer) in 11° 50′ N., 123° 00′ E.

3. The *Wakaba* (destroyer) was sunk on 24th October by carrier aircraft south of Mindoro Island in 11° 50′ N., 127° 25′ E. The ship cannot be identified as having taken part in the Battle for Leyte Gulf, but was no doubt engaged in reinforcement of Leyte.

(B) Damaged

Northern Force

Ship	*Type*	*Date*	*Details*
Hyuga ..	Battleship carrier	25th October ..	By Third Fleet aircraft east of Luzon.
Ise	Battleship carrier		
	Centre Force		
Yamato ..	Battleship ..	24th October ..	By Third Fleet aircraft during approach to San Bernardino Strait.
Nagato ..	Battleship ..		
Yahagi ..	Light cruiser ..		
Takao ..	Heavy cruiser	23rd October ..	Torpedoed by U.S. S/M in Palawan Passage and returned to Brunei.
Myoko ..	Heavy cruiser	24th October ..	By Third Fleet aircraft during approach to San Bernardino Strait and returned to Brunei.
Kumano ..	Heavy cruiser ..	25th October ..	Torpedoed during Battle of Samar by Seventh Fleet destroyers and/or destroyer escorts and returned to Brunei.
Kiyoshimo ..	Destroyer ..	24th October ..	By Third Fleet aircraft during approach to San Bernardino Strait.

APPENDIX H—*continued*

Southern Force

Ship	*Type*	*Date*	*Details of Sinking*
Ashigara ..	Heavy cruiser	25th October ..	By air attack during retreat after Battle of Surigao Strait.
Nachi ..	Heavy cruiser	25th October ..	By collision with *Mogami* in Surigao Strait.
Shigure ..	Destroyer ..	25th October ..	By shell fire near misses in Battle of Surigao Strait.

APPENDIX J

SUMMARY OF AIR BATTLES[1]

Carrier Air Operations, Third and Seventh Fleets, 24th/26th October

Target	*Combat Sorties* *Total*	*Fighters*	*Bombers*	*Torpedo A/C*	*Tons of Bombs*	*Combat Losses*[2] *Fighters*	*Bombers*	*Torpedo A/C*
Northern Force ..	492	170	174	148	262	6	3	10
Centre Force (T.F.38)	595	243	187	165	276	8	20	15
(T.G.77.4[3])	453	201	—	252	191	17	—	18
Southern Force ..	48	26	12	10	12	1	—	1
	1,588	640	373	575	741	32	23	44

Torpedo expenditure :—Task Force 38 —202
Task Group 77.4—83

JAPANESE AIR LOSSES—24th/26th OCTOBER[4]

Shot down by units of Task Force 38	179
Shot down by units of Task Group 77.4 ..	138
Shot down in attacks on enemy Fleet units ..	53
Total	370

APPENDIX K

BATTLE OF SURIGAO STRAIT—SIGNALS

(A) Signals 24th October (*Secret Information Bulletin, No. 22*, p. 78–14).

Time		
1513	C.T.G. 77.2. *v.* C.T.F.77	Be ready for night battle. Japanese force estimated two battleships, four heavy cruisers, four light cruisers, 10 destroyers reported to be under attack in Eastern Sulu Sea by our carrier planes on 24th October. Japanese able to arrive Leyte Gulf tonight. Make all ready for night battle. C.T.G.77.2 reinforced by T.G.77.3. P.Ts. in maximum number from C.T.G.70.1 to be stationed lower Surigao Strait and stay south of 10.10 N. during darkness.

[1] From Cincpac, *Report*, p. 108.

[2] Does not include operational losses, which were rather heavy.

[3] Does not include data from *Gambier Bay* and *St. Lo*.

[4] Including attacks on enemy Fleet units, aircraft at land targets, on combat air patrols and searches.

APPENDIX K—*continued*

Later. Time not specified	C.T.G.77.2. *v.* C.T.F.77	Prior to darkness place boats in sections of two or three boats each as follows : Panaon—south-west tip. South of Madilao Point. South of Limasawa Island. Two of the sections will patrol between Agio Point Bohol past Camiguin Island to Sipaca Point Mindanao. It is important that each section leader report contacts. *Wachapreague* and other section leaders must relay these reports to Codliver. From Oyster Bay, 21 boats placed as follows : Panaon Island—south-east tip. Belaa Point Mindanao. Five sections in Surigao Strait. One section off Suminon Island. One medchart off Kanhatic Point Dinagat Island. Two off Kanihaan Island. One south-east Amagusan Point. *Wachapreague* will inform L.C.I.s last station. After making report of contact, sections will attack independently.

(B) Extracts from T.B.S. Log of U.S.S. *Maryland*, 25th October (M.0124/45)

0021 . . . . *v.* P.T. 127. Contact made with three enemy destroyers and two large unidentified ships at 2310, 10 miles off south-east tip of Bohol I., headed north.
0144 C.T.G.77.2, Desron 54 *v.* C.T.G.79.11. Contact bearing 1400T, distance two miles from Pinta Point.
0206 C.T.G.77.2 *v.* C.T.G.77.3. P.T. 134 reports target a large ship and is attacking him with undetermined results. Target trying to drive them off with gunfire.
0226 . . . . *v.* C.T.G.77.2. Ten large ships passing up Strait through first line of P.T. boats.
Note.—Other ships received this signal as " Two large ships ".
0233 Battle Line *v.* ComBatDiv. Three. Go to General quarters.
0245 C.T.G.79.11 *v. McGowan*. See three or more skunks in line, bearing 194° T, distance 15 miles, course 000° T in column.
0300 *Monssen v.* ComDesDiv. 108. *McDermut* take three targets, you take smaller one to the north.
0301 *McGowan v.* C.T.G.79.11. Make smoke.
0303 ComDesRon. 24 *v.* C.T.G.77.3. Proceed to attack. Follow down west shore line. Follow other groups in, then retire north. Make smoke.
0307 Battle Line *v.* ComBatDiv. Three. Ships left 180°.
Note.—This brought the Battle Line to course 090°.
0309 C.T.G.77.2 *v.* C.T.G.79.11. One group two large and one small headed north in column. We are being straddled.
0314 *Monssen v.* ComDesDiv. 108. All fish laid. Headed back.
0316 C.T.G.77.2 *v. West Virginia*. Two skunks bearing 165° T, distance 42,000 yards.
0318 C.T.G.77.2 *v.* C.T.G.79.11. Five targets, two may be hit, slowing down and dropping behind, slightly turning.
0320 C.T.G.77.2 *v.* ComDesDiv. 108. Scored a big flare on one of them.
0321 C.T.G.77.2 *v.* ComCruDiv. 12. C.T.G.79.11 trying to get more accurate report. Believe two battleships (ComDesDiv. 108 believes two battleships and *McGowan* said three or four small) and one or two cruisers.
0328 Battle Line *v.* ComBatDiv. Three. Steam at 15 knots.
0332 Battle Line *v.* ComBatDiv. Three. Open fire at 26,000 yards.
0334 *Monssen v.* ComDesDiv. 108. Enemy appears to be retiring.
0335 ComDesRon. 56 *v.* C.T.G.77.2. Launch attack, hit the big boys.
0338 Battle Line, screen *v.* ComBatDiv. Three. Concentrate your sections 4,000 yards from nearest battleship.
0347 C.T.G.77.2. *v.* ComCruDiv. 12. P.T.523 reports five destroyers and one larger ship passing northerly direction up the Straits.
0350 C.T.G.77.2 *v.* ComBatDiv. Three. I have two groups of small ones followed by a group of large ones. When large ones reach 26,000 I will open fire.
0351 Destroyers, Cruisers *v.* C.T.G.77.2. . . . . to open fire.
0352 . . . . *v.* C.T.G.77.3. Believe those three little ones out in front are friendly trying to get out.
0352 ComBatDiv. Three *v. West Virginia*. We are ready to open fire.
0354 Battle Line *v.* ComBatDiv. Three. Ships right 30°.
0355 C.T.G.77.3 *v.* C.T.G.77.2. Open fire. *Reply*. We opened fire when you did.
0400 ComBatDiv. Three *v.* C.T.G.77.2. Suggest you reverse course to 270° T.

APPENDIX K—*continued*

0401 C.T.G.77.2. *v. A. W. Grant.* Three section torpedoes away. DesDiv. 112 turn on I.F.F.
0402 Battle Line *v.* ComBatDiv. Three. Ships right 150°.
0404 Sec. One (ComDesRon. 56) *v.* ComDesRon. 56. Fire torpedoes when ready.
0405 C.T.G.77.2 *v.* ComCruDiv. 12. Splashes dead ahead on starboard bow—*Denver* and *Minneapolis* being straddled.
0406 All ships *v.* C.T.G.77.2. Cease firing. You are firing into ComDesRon. 56 boys in middle of channel. (They reported getting out at full speed.)
0408 Battleships *v.* ComBatDiv. Three. Cease firing.
0412 T.U.77.2.2 Cruisers *v.* C.T.G.77.2. Ships left 180°.
0418 BatDiv. Four *v.* ComBatDiv. Three. Ships right 90°.
0420 C.T.G.77.3. *v.* C.T.G.77.2. Resume fire.
0421 ComBatDiv. Two *v.* ComBatDiv. Three. Rejoin Battle Line when you have your division squared away.
0422 C.T.G.77.2. *v. Denver.* Large target we were shooting at has disappeared from sight.
0426 T.U. 77.2.2 *v.* C.T.G.77.2. Open fire when you have a solution.
0427 C.T.G.77.2. *v.* C.T.G.77.3. P.T. boats report some ships heading south now.
0428 C.T.G.77.2. *v.* ComCruDiv. 12. About four small targets bearing 184° T, 14 to 17 miles.
0429 *A. W. Grant* hit and lying dead in the water.
0526 T.U. 77.2.2 Cruisers *v.* C.T.G.77.2 Open fire when target bearing (interference cut out rest of transmission).
0541 T.U.77.2.2 cruisers *v.* C.T.G.77.2. Cease firing.

APPENDIX L

NIGHT SURFACE ACTION EAST OF LUZON—SIGNALS

(Extracts from T.B.S. log of U.S.S. *Santa Fe* 25th October (M.01553/45))

1249 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* C.T.F.38. Northern enemy group has two C.Vs. flanked by three DDs. and followed by one BB, course 340, speed 22 ; 19 miles astern of northern group is one CA, speed . . . , damaged. Eight miles astern of this CA are one carrier, dead in the water, and two damaged cruisers, screened by one BB, which may or may not be damaged.
1251 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* C.T.F.38. Position of second group is southernmost ; lat. 18° 47′ N., long. 126° 30′ E.
1253 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* C.T.F.38. Take station north of C.T.G.38.3 which you will be able to do during next C.T.G.38.3 flight operation.
1254 C.T.F. 38 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Wilco.
1300 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* C.T.F.38. Desire you recommend whether or not you can take on battleships if so ordered.
1305 C.T.F.38 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. I do not believe that light cruisers should take on a battleship, and nobody knows that fellow's condition. I do not think light cruisers are capable of handling that situation.
1307 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* C.T.F.38. Take station to the north of C.T.G.38.3, maybe we can work him over.
1309 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* ComCruDiv. 6. Do you want us to follow astern of you. *Reply.* Affirmative.
1310 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* ComDesRon. 50. Shall both screens form one screen unit now. *Reply.* 1311. Affirmative.
1350 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* C.T.F.38. C.T.G.38.3. suggests torpedo attack on any worthwhile targets remaining after dark.
1352 C.T.F.38 *v.* ComDesRon. 50. Information ComCruDiv. 13. I concur and think a torpedo attack an excellent idea. Suggest, if feasible, a peek over the horizon before dark.
1358. C.T.U.38.3.3 *v.* C.T.G.38.3. Be prepared if directed to make night torpedo attack on any worthwhile targets after dark. C.T.U. 38.3.4 designate six destroyers to participate. *Reno* and four destroyers will remain with CVs. *Essex* will furnish two VF(N) for snooping.
1400 C.T.F.38 *v.* C.T.U.38.3.3. We can do that all right. However, I still am of the opinion that if he should be able to get those two battleships together it is going to be tough on the cruisers. However, if you think it possible, we will do it. I am just expressing my honest opinion on the situation.

APPENDIX L—*continued*

1412 ComCruDiv. 13, ComDesRon. 50 *v.* C.T.F.38. An unconfirmed report has one battleship and one destroyer with southern group leaving them. If this is true, it will leave one damaged carrier and two light cruisers with the southern group.
1415 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* C.T.G.38.3. Take your cruisers and destroyers on a northerly course to the crippled group. We will give you further information when received.
1431 C.T.G.38.3., ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* C.T.F.38. At 1800 C.T.G.38.3, will be in vicinity lat. 19° 00′ N., long. 126° 40′ E. I will remain in this vicinity until 1900 ; course 180°, speed 15 knots, until ComCruDiv. 13 rejoins.
1439 C.T.G.38.3 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Will there be any CAP over this group.
1445 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* C.T.G.38.3. We will send CAP of four planes to go with you.
1448 ComCruDiv. 6 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. We will make *New Orleans* fighter director.
1449 *New Orleans v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Please acknowledge last transmission and get in touch with C.T.G.38.3.
1503 ComDesRon. 50 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Believe we might have some of the rear destroyers spread out a bit to increase breadth of sweep for downed pilots.
1506 ComCruDiv. 6 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. *Santa Fe* will lead until reaching area ; then break up into pairs.
1610 ComDesRon. 50 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Form two destroyer groups on quarters of heavy and light cruiser column.
1617 ComCruDiv. 6 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Heavy cruisers open up when you are ready.
1632 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* Mobile. Request permission to open fire.
1641 . . . . *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Destroyers on starboard quarter close target and expend a portion of your torpedoes. It is desired you do not waste them.
1641 All cruisers *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Cease fire.
1646 ComCruDiv. 6 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. I believe the transmission you heard me signal was to cease fire ; to all ships except *Wichita.*
1649 *New Orleans v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Have your spotting S.O.C. have a good look for anything else of interest.
1655 ComDesDiv. 99 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Bear a hand. We are coming back to pick you up.
1655 ComCruDiv. 13 *v. Healy.* Following message from ComDesRon. 50 : " She is now going down ; she is not worth a torpedo. I am rejoining ".
1721 All cruisers *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. If your planes have completed their search, recall them and stand by to recover.
1755 ComDesRon 55 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Will you be senior in the destroyers. *Reply.* Affirmative. Please give me your desire as to how you want the destroyers stationed.
1755 ComDesRon. 55 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Form three attack groups astern of cruisers.
1801 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* ComDesRon. 55. If you have no objections, I will form four groups of three each. *Reply.* Affirmative.
1815 *New Orleans v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Tell the Black Chickens to go out about 10 to 15 miles to see what they can see, and make report.
1816 *New Orleans v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Tell the VF(N) to go ahead 10 or 15 miles before they make their report.
1847 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* ComDesRon. 55. Following is order of left column : ComDesRon. 55 in *Porterfield* with *Callaghan* and *Knapp,* followed by ComDesDiv. 100 in *Cogswell* with *Ingersoll* and *Caperton* ; right-hand column, ComDesRon. 50 in *C. K. Bronson* with *Cotten* and *Patterson. Healy* leader of rear section, followed by *Dortch* and *Bagley.*
1850 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* ComCruDiv. 6. We make out three surface targets in this group ahead.
1851 Ships my command *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. As soon as you are in range and have a good set up, commence firing ; light cruisers on near targets and heavy cruisers on far targets.
1909 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* ComCruDiv. 6. Farthest target is out of range for *Wichita.* Request permission for her to open fire on closer target.
1913 ComDesRon. 55 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. What do you think of sending section in to polish off that target that is burning.
1915 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* ComDesRon. 55. Affirmative. ComDesDiv. 100 take your section on target that is burning.
1922 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* ComDesRon. 55. I do not have any plots of target that is dead in water. All targets making good speed and I do not believe ComDesDiv. 100 can catch them.
Reply. Roger. Have ComDesDiv. 100 resume station.

APPENDIX L—*continued*

1929 ComCruDiv. 13 *v. New Orleans.* Do you wish *New Orleans* to open fire on target. *Reply.* Affirmative.
1930 ComDesRon. 55 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Do you think ComDesDiv. 100 should see what he can do.
1931 ComDesDiv. 100 *v.* ComDesRon. 55. I believe you can get in and get off your torpedoes now.
1932 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* ComDesRon. 55. I believe ComDesDiv. 100 can make it.
1932 ComDesRon. 55 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Please have him do so.
1938 Light cruisers *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Get a good set up and take him under slow fire to cover destroyers.
1950 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* ComCruDiv. 6. Following is approximately percentage main battery AP. expended by *Wichita* 22 ; *New Orleans* 35.
2003 ComDesDiv. 100 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. We have target very very slow ; almost dead in water.
2004 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* ComDesDiv. 100. He slowed down, but I believe he is increasing again.
2010 *Caperton, Ingersoll v.* ComDesDiv. 100. Stand by to fire torpedoes.
2011 ComCruDiv. 13 *v. Mobile.* We are going to hold fire due to ComDesDiv. 100 last transmission. *Reply.* Roger.
2012 DesDiv. 100 *v.* ComDesDiv. 100. Stand by—fire torpedoes.
2018 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* ComDesDiv. 100. We have torpedoes in water ; about 5½ minutes to run.
2019 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* ComDesDiv. 100. We have been firing for the last few minutes. Enemy opened fire on us.
2020 *Sante Fe v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Cease firing. *Mobile* take over slow deliberate fire.
2031 ComCruDiv. 13 *v.* ComDesDiv. 100. I saw flashes about the time torpedoes were due to get there, and there appeared to be a large explosion later. Target still seems to be swathed in smoke.
2036 *Wichita v.* ComCruDiv. 13. When you get into 10,000 yards, open up and please sink this ship.
2037 *Wichita v.* ComCruDiv. 13. If you think you can do it now, go ahead and open fire.
2044 *Wichita v.* ComCruDiv. 13. *Santa Fe* will illuminate.
2049 Ships my command, *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Cease firing.
2050 ComDesRon. 55 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Have one of your destroyers put a torpedo into him.
2056 ComDesRon. 55 *v.* ComCruDiv. 13. As you go by him we will have *New Orleans* illuminate. Request you finish him off with torpedo.
2057 Com Cru Div. 13 *v.* ComDesRon. 55. *Porterfield* is heading for him now, course 310. *New Orleans,* as you pass him keep him illuminated for ComDesRon. 55 to finish him off with a torpedo.
2057 *New Orleans v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Belay last order.
2058 ComCruDiv 13 *v.* ComDesRon 55. I assume that light cruisers have ceased firing. *Reply.* Light cruisers have ceased firing.
2059 *Porterfield v.* ComCruDiv. 13. Has he gone down. *Reply.* He has gone down. We were cheated.

APPENDIX M

EXTRACTS FROM JAPANESE ORDERS, REPORTS AND MESSAGES 17th/26th OCTOBER, 1944

Note.—S.M.S. = Special Message Series (Japanese prefix).

I.—GENERAL

17th October

1. 0855 Combined Fleet Des. Op. Ord. No. 361 (S.M.S.170835) orders prepare for Operation Sho 1 [Defence of the Philippines].
2. 1000 Combined Fleet Des. Op. Ord. No. 353 (S.M.S.170928) orders 1st Division Attack Force to proceed to Brunei as soon as possible.

Note.—The 1st Division Attack Force, comprised the tactical units of the Second Fleet and its supply forces. Referred to in this Appendix as Second Fleet.

APPENDIX M—*continued*

18th October

3. 0100 Second Fleet left Lingga for Brunei.
4. 1808 Combined Fleet Des. Op. Ord. No. 360 (S.M.S.181732). Carry out Operation Sho I.
5. — Combined Fleet S.M.S.181101 assigned Fifth Fleet to South-west Area Force X.

20th October

6. 1200 Second Fleet arrived at Brunei.

21st October

7. 1200 Commander-in-Chief Combined Fleet appoints 25th October as X-Day and 24th as Y-Day.
8. 1533 *Commander-in-Chief Combined Fleet Des. Op. Ord. No. 363 (S.M.S.200813)* (Extract).

3. Second Fleet will break through to the Tacloban area at dawn on 25th (X-Day) and after first destroying the enemy's surface forces, will cut down his landing forces.

4. Co-ordinating its actions with those of the Second Fleet, the Mobile Force will manœuvre east of Luzon in order to draw off the enemy to the north. At the same time utilize any opportunity to attack and destroy him.

5. Commander-in-Chief South-west Area Fleet will command all Naval air forces concentrated in the Philippine area, and in co-ordination with the break-through by Second Fleet, will carry out destructive attacks against the enemy's carrier and landing forces. At the same time, in co-operation with the Army, counter attacks will be made against the enemy's land forces.

9. 1925 In accordance with Combined Fleet Des. Op. Ord. No. 367, Second Fleet is placed under direct command of Commander-in-Chief Combined Fleet.
10. 2053 *Commander-in-Chief Second Fleet.* S.M.S. 212053.

1. Main force of Second Fleet (4th C.S., 5th C.S., 7th C.S., 1st B.S., 3rd B.S., 2nd D.F., 10th Destroyer Division) [*i.e.*, Centre Force] is to proceed from Brunei at 220800, speed of advance 16 knots, north Palawan course ; south of Mindoro on 24th and thereafter speed 20 to 24 knots. Arrive at east entrance to San Bernardino at sundown of same day, and at 0400 X-Day arrive in vicinity of Suluan Island, from whence break through to anchorage.

2. 3rd Group (2nd B.S., *Mogami* and four destroyers) [*i.e.*, Southern Force] will leave Brunei during afternoon of 22nd. It will arrive at *East* [H.S. Ital.] entrance to Surigao Straits in the Mindanao Sea at about sundown, on X-Day minus one, after crossing the Sulu Sea. In co-ordination with main force of Second Fleet it will break through to anchorage at dawn on X-Day.

22nd October

11. 0805 Centre Force sailed from Brunei.
12. 1500 Southern Force sailed from Brunei.
13. 1700 Commander-in-Chief Second Fleet ordered air reconnaissance for 23rd October.

23rd October

14. 2034 *Combined Fleet S.M.S. 2317/10 From Chief of Staff, Combined Fleet.* Appreciation of situation as at 231200 :

1. Enemy. It is very probable that the enemy is aware that we have concentrated our forces. He will probably act in the following manner :

(i) Concentrate submarines in great strength in the San Bernardino and Surigao Straits areas.

(ii) Plan attacks on our surface forces with large type aircraft and task forces, after to-morrow morning.

(iii) Plan decisive action by concentrating his surface strength in the area east of San Bernardino Strait and Tacloban where he has his transport group. He should be able to carry out this disposition by the afternoon of 24th.

APPENDIX M—*continued*

23rd October—continued

2. Our intentions

(i) Carry out the original plan.

(ii) In carrying out the operation, the following points are specially emphasized :—

(*a*) Compensate for our inferior surface strength by making every effort to direct the enemy to the north towards the Main Body of the Mobile Force.

(*b*) Intensify precautions against submarine and air attacks. Make every effort to keep enemy submarines under control, particularly while breaking through the narrow straits.

(*c*) Destroy enemy carriers with our shore-based aircraft whilst their aircraft are attacking our surface forces.

25th October

15. 1925 *Combined Fleet* S.M.S. 251647. Combined Fleet Des. Op. Ord. No. 374. 1. If opportunity occurs First Diversion Attack Force will make contact with and destroy remainder of enemy to-night. The other forces will co-ordinate their action with above.

2. If there is no chance of engaging the enemy in a night action to-night, the Main Body of the Mobile Force and First Diversion Attack Force will proceed to their refuelling points as ordered by their respective commanders.

II

CENTRE FORCE

(Second Fleet—Vice-Admiral Kurita)

23rd October

16. 0530 Speed 18 knots on zigzag course. (During night speed 16 knots, without zigzagging).

17. 0634 *Atago* hit by four torpedoes.

18. 0634 *Takao* hit by two torpedoes and put out of action [" became inoperational "].

19. 0653 *Atago* sank in 9° 28′ N., 117° 17′ E.

20. 0656 *Maya* hit by four torpedoes.

21. 0700 *Maya* sank.

22. 0739 Commander-in-Chief Second Fleet (on board *Kishinami*) assigned *Chokai* [only remaining ship of 4th C.S.] to 5th C.S.

23. 0830 *From Commander-in-Chief Second Fleet (on board " Kishinami ") to Vice-Admiral 1st B.S.* (" *Yamato* "). I intend to transfer flag of Commander-in-Chief Second Fleet to *Yamato*. Vice-Admiral 1st B.S. will assume command of fleet until Commander-in-Chief comes aboard.

24. 1026 *From V.A. 1st B.S. to Commander-in-Chief Combined Fleet, Mobile Fleet* [Northern Force], *South-west Area Fleet and Chief of Naval General Staff.* 1. At 0634 (daybreak) *Atago* and *Maya* were sunk and *Takao* put out of action by three enemy submarines. (Two destroyers have been assigned to *Takao*).

2. Commander-in-Chief is at present on board the *Kishinami* and intends to board the *Yamato* about 1300.

3. I am temporarily assuming command of Second Fleet. Operations are being continued according to plan.

25. 1630 Flag of Commander-in-Chief Second Fleet hoisted on board *Yamato* and command of Second Fleet exercised from her.

24th October

26. 0810 Enemy carrier aircraft established contact.

27. 1055 Second Fleet reported attack by 30 carrier based aircraft which were beaten off.

28. 1135 *Myoko* hit by one torpedo. Speed reduced to 15 knots. Ordered to proceed to Brunei unescorted.

29. 1220 Second Fleet spot report No. 2. *Musashi* hit by one torpedo.

30. 1225 Second Fleet reported attack by second wave of aircraft, consisting of about 30 carrier based aircraft.

31. 1250 Second Fleet action spot report No. 3 : *Musashi* hit by three (making a total of four) torpedoes, with many near misses. Maximum speed 22 knots.

APPENDIX M—*continued*

24th October—continued

32. 1315 *Second Fleet S.M.S. 241315 to Main Body, Mobile Force and South-west Area Fleet ; R. to Combined Fleet, 1st Air Fleet, 2nd Air Fleet.* We are being subjected to repeated attacks by enemy carrier-based aircraft. Report immediately contacts and attacks made by you on the enemy.

33. 1342 Second Fleet action spot report No. 4 : Third wave consisting of about 80 carrier-based aircraft attacked us.

34. 1452 Second Fleet action spot report No. 5 : *Musashi* hit by one (making total five) torpedo ; *Yamato* hit by one bomb : *Musashi's* operational capacity impaired. *Kiyoshimo* is standing by her and she will proceed to Bako via Koron, if necessary, under own power.

35. 1510 Second Fleet action spot report No. 6 : Fourth wave, consisting of 25 aircraft attacked. *Yamato* hit forward by bomb.

36. 1530 Second Fleet action spot report No. 7 : Being engaged by 5th wave, consisting of over 100 aircraft.

37. 1602 Second Fleet action spot report No. 8 : During attack of 5th wave, additional damage has apparently been inflicted on the *Musashi*. Details not yet determined. *Nagato* bombed, maximum speed now 21 knots. *Yamato* hit by further bombs but fighting power unimpaired.

38. 1719 Supplement to action spot report No. 8 : *Kiyoshimo* bombed, maximum speed 20 knots. *Yahagi* damaged by near misses, maximum speed 22 knots.

39. — Commander-in-Chief Second Fleet S.M.S. 241600 reported to Commander-in-Chief Combined Fleet that in view of inability of the Japanese air forces to keep down the attacks on the Centre Force, which was being gradually reduced in fighting power, and the failure of the main body of the Mobile Force to divert or attack the enemy, the best course open to the Second Fleet was to retire temporarily beyond range of air attack and " reform " their plans.

40. 1815 *Combined Fleet* S.M.S. 241813. Combined Fleet Des. Op. Ord. 372. With confidence in heavenly guidance, the entire force will attack.

41. 1939 *Second Fleet S.M.S. 241939 to Commander Detached Reconnaissance Unit Second Fleet.* Second Fleet is advancing. Report enemy situation in areas east of Legaspi, east of Samar and Leyte, immediately.

42. 2145 *Second Fleet* S.M.S. 242145. Main force Second Fleet (four battleships, six cruisers, two light cruisers and 11 destroyers) intends to pass through San Bernardino Straits at 250100 ; proceed southward down the east coast of Samar and arrive position Yaruse 32 [?] at about 260600 (sic.) and in Leyte Gulf at about 1100 same day. 3rd Group [Southern Force] will break into Leyte Gulf as scheduled and then join forces with the Main Force in the vicinity of 10 miles north-east of Suluan at 250900.

43. 2213 *Second Fleet* S.M.S. 242213. We were subjected to repeated enemy carrier-based air attacks all day long on 24th resulting in considerable damage to us. Powerful enemy task forces to the east and to the north of Legaspi are exceedingly active.

Main Force of Second Fleet, chancing annihilation, is determined to break through to Tacloban anchorage to destroy the enemy.

The air force is ordered to carry out a full strength attack against task forces. It is strongly desired that the whole force throw its entire power into the fray so as to attain its aims.

25th October

44. 0653 Commander-in-Chief Second Fleet reported sighting enemy masts.

45. 0700 Commander-in-Chief Second Fleet reported opening fire on three enemy carriers.

46. 0702 Commander-in-Chief Second Fleet reported engaging enemy task force and ordered 3rd Section [Vice-Admiral Nishimura's force] to join him.

47. 0725 Commander-in-Chief Second Fleet reported sinking one enemy cruiser.

48. 0730 Commander-in-Chief Second Fleet reported that enemy is a task force consisting of six carriers (three of which are " regular " carriers) which is attempting to escape in smoke screen.

49. 0736 Commander-in-Chief Second Fleet claims to have sunk one carrier.

50. 0845 Commander-in-Chief Second Fleet advises shore-based air forces of First Diversion Attack Force that he is engaging the enemy and orders air reconnaissance of this enemy force and also of the enemy in Leyte Gulf.

51. 0907 *Chikuma* reports to *Yamato* that she has been hit by one torpedo rendering her unnavigable.

52. 0911 Commander-in-Chief Second Fleet orders all ships in force to close the formations

53. 0918 *From " Chokai* to " *Yamato ".* Bomb hit on forward aircraft ; trying to repair same.

APPENDIX M—*continued*

25th October—continued

54. 0920 *From " Chikuma " to " Yamato ".* One propeller, speed 18 knots, unable to steer.
55. 0945 *From V.A. 7th C.S.* Have shifted flag to *Suzuya* (flagship changed in consequence of damage to *Kumano.*)
56. 1000 *Second Fleet* S.M.S. 251000 action spot report No. 1 (25th October) : Known results obtained to present : definitely sunk, two aircraft carriers (includes one fleet carrier), two heavy cruisers and some destroyers. Definitely hit : One or two carriers. Still under attack by enemy carrier-based aircraft. Remainder of enemy (including six or seven carriers) is making use of squalls and smoke screens to effect its retirement to south-east. Following own ships heavily damaged : *Chokai, Chikuma, Kumano.* Others being checked. Am proceeding northward at present. (251000).
57. 1030 *Kumano* S.M.S. 250945. Heading for San Bernardino Straits. Actual speed 15 knots.
58. 1030. *From Commander 19th Destroyer Division (" Yahagi ")*
1. Results obtained by us : one carrier of *Enterprise* class sunk and one seriously damaged (sinking almost certain) : three destroyers.
2. Own damage : *Yahagi* hit, but speed and navigability not affected.
59. 1100 *Second Fleet* S.M.S. 251100. Amend my Action Spot report No. 1. as follows : Three or four carriers, including one of *Enterprise* class have been sunk.
60. 1115 *Second Fleet* S.M.S. 251030. Enemy carrier based aircraft, including those from damaged carriers are using Tacloban base (voice communication intercepted).
61. 1120 *Owada Communication Unit.* S.M.S. 250924 [Intercept]. Being attacked by an enemy force consisting of four battleships, eight cruisers, and other units. Vice-Admiral Lee ? will proceed to and from ? Leyte area. Request that high speed carriers proceed to attack immediately 0727.
62. 1120 *Second Fleet* S.M.S. 251120. My position Yatti Ma 37 (?) course south-west. Proceeding to Leyte anchorage. Enemy task force is in position 30 miles to north-east and another large force 60 miles to south-east.
63. 1144 *Takao Communication Unit.* S.M.S. 250940. Enemy message en clair (broadcast at 250905 from Admiralty Is.) : Our force is being attacked by a force composed of four battleships, eight cruisers, and others. Proceed to Leyte at top speed. From Commander New Guinea Operations Force to 1st Task Fleet.
64. 1150 *From Commander-in-Chief, Second Fleet to Commanders-in-Chief First Air Fleet and South-West Area Fleet* [No S.M.S. Number].
Attack the enemy task force reported at 0945 in position Ya Kilka (?).
65. 1206 Second Fleet requested information of targets and results obtained.
66. 1230 Owada Communication Unit intercepted plain text message that Admiral Kinkaid cancels present orders and orders addressee to proceed to point 300 (?) miles south-east of Leyte Gulf.
67. 1236 *Second Fleet* S.M.S. 251236. First Diversion Attack Force abandoning plan to break through to Leyte Gulf. Reversing course and will proceed northward along the east coast of Samar in search of an enemy task force. After decisively engaging same, intend to go through San Bernardino Strait.
68. 1325 In an action spot report Commander-in-Chief, Second Fleet reported being attacked by 72 enemy bombers and torpedo aircraft and later by 19 bombers, but only slight damage sustained.
69. 1710 The South-West Area Force reported that with the exception of one regular carrier damaged by a Kamikaze Special Attack Unit, results obtained are undetermined.
70. 1732 In an action spot report Commander-in-Chief, Second Fleet reported being attacked by about 60 carrier-based bombers and some damage sustained. Also stated that two friendly bombers attacked the fleet in error.
71. 1917 Commander-in-Chief Second Fleet ordered all damaged units to make every possible effort to proceed alone but where this is impossible to sink the ship transfer crew to escorting vessel and proceed to Koron.
72. 2130 *Second Fleet* S.M.S. 252130. In view of the one sidedness of the decisive action carried out today, 25th, the enemy will very likely attempt to carry out revenge attacks against us with entire strength of remainder of his task force. It is probable that such contact would be made in an area to east or north of Legaspi on 26th. We consider the situation may offer an excellent opportunity for the shore-based air force to strike the first blow against the enemy and gain control of the air.

APPENDIX M—*continued*

III

3rd GROUP (" C " FORCE)

(Vice-Admiral Nishimura) (Part of Southern Force)

24th October

73. 1151 *2nd B.S.* reported being attacked by enemy aircraft which caused only minor damage. (Two of *Fuso's* aircraft were lost by fire.)
74. 2020 *2nd B.S.* S.M.S. 242013. We intend to break through to Dulag at 250400.

25th October

75. 0220 *2nd B.S.* S.M.S. 250100. Passed southern entrance of Surigao Strait at 0130 and broke through to Leyte Gulf. Unable to determine enemy dispositions apart from sighting some torpedo boats. There are squalls but the weather in general is gradually improving.
76. 0335 *2nd B.S.* reported sighting what appeared to be three enemy ships.
77. 1425 *2nd B.S.* S.M.S. 250330. Enemy destroyers and torpedo boats disposed on both sides of north entrance to Surigao Strait. Two of our destroyers hit by torpedoes and are out of control ; *Yamashiro* hit by one torpedo but navigability unaffected.
78. 1535 *Shigure* S.M.S. 251018 reported that the 3rd Section passed the southern entrance to Surigao Strait at 0130. At 0355 it encountered powerful enemy surface units (estimated to include four battleships, five cruisers, and five destroyers). Own ships engaged enemy to the last but with exception of *Shigure* all were sunk (not certain of one destroyer of 4th Division). Enemy made skilful use of islands for concealment and made extreme use of electronic devices, rendering it extremely difficult for the *Shigure* to determine enemy dispositions. Since the *Shigure* was all alone, decided to retire to the south and to consider subsequent plans. Whilst retiring, steering gear broke down, necessitating resort to hand steering. Though emergency repairs were made ship could not be handled easily, accordingly decided to head for Koron.

IV

FIFTH FLEET

(Vice-Admiral Shima) (Part of Southern Force)

24th October

79. 2255 *Fifth Fleet* S.M.S. 242245. Second Diversion Attack Force will pass through south entrance to Surigao Strait at 0300. Intend to break through with speed of 26 knots.

25th October

80. 0150 *Fifth Fleet* S.M.S. 250101. Second Diversion Attack Force two cruisers, one light cruiser, and four destroyers expect to break through from south entrance to Surigao Strait at 250300. Plan to make a clockwise sweep of Leyte Gulf after passing the Dulag area, and head for the south entrance to Surigao Strait (0900) destroying the enemy wherever he may be found. At 0900 Second Diversion Attack Force will have fuel left for 48 hours at 18 knots.
81. 0418 Fifth Fleet reported arriving " on battle grounds."
82. 0532 Message from Fifth Fleet reported complete destruction of 2nd B.S. and that the *Mogami* is seriously damaged and burning.

V

NORTHERN (CARRIER) FORCE

(Main Body of Mobile Force, Vice-Admiral Ozawa)

20th October

83. 1700 Kd. M.B. (Main Body of Mobile Force) sailed from Okishima in Bungo Suido.
84. 1745 Sacki Air Group aircraft sighted enemy Submarine bearing 170° distance, 15 Km. (eight nautical miles) from *Zuikaku.*
85. 1845 Discovered by enemy Submarines radar ; proceeded eastward until 2100.

APPENDIX M—*continued*

21st October

86. 0700 First search flights carried out by Kd. M.B.

22nd October

87. 0850 *Hyuga* intercepted apparent enemy task force voice transmission.

24th October

88. 0820 Aircraft of 6th Base Air Force reported sighting enemy bearing 60° distance 90 (? Km. = 48½ nautical miles) from Manila.

89. 0910 Aircraft of Air Group 901 reported sighting enemy force including four carriers and about 10 other ships proceeding eastward.

90. 1115 A Kd. M.B. reconnaissance aircraft reports sighting enemy proceeding northward in position bearing 120°, distance 180 miles from the Mobile Force. Unable to see whether any carriers in the force. Visibility 20. Fierce squalls to eastward and south of it.

91. 1145 Attack unit takes off [to attack force sighted at 1115]. Forty fighters, 28 bombers, two reconnaissance, and six torpedo aircraft. Position of enemy task force : bearing about 210°, distance 150 to 160 miles.

92. — Kd. M.B. Sig. Des. Op. Ord. No. 2 (S.M.S. 241439).
1. Assume tactical disposition.
2. Advance Guard (4th Carrier Squadron, 61st Destroyer Division, less *Suzutsuki*, 41st Destroyer Division (*Shimotsuki*)) will proceed southward. Contact, at the opportune moment, the remaining enemy and destroy him.
3. The reconnaissance aircraft will establish and maintain contact with the enemy from about 1500 to sundown.
4. The main body will proceed westward until about 1600. After taking on our aircraft it will proceed south eastward and will continue the battle on the following morning.

Note.—The principal object of the Advance Guard is to divert the enemy. If, therefore, there seems to be little or no chance of a night engagement, it will expeditiously rejoin the main body.

93. 1635 One enemy aircraft sighted. He reported our position.

94. 1910 Received despatch from C.-in-C., Combined Fleet, telling one and all to have confidence in Divine Guidance and attack.

95. 2000 Second Fleet reports that it is retiring beyond range of enemy air attacks.

96. 2010 [In view of Second Fleet retirement.]Possibility of Kd. M.B. standing alone against enemy strength. The entire Kd. M.B., therefore, was ordered to turn 16 points and retire northward.

97. 2110 Combined Fleet S.M.S. 241959. In receipt of Second Fleet S.M.S. 241600 [outlining reasons for retiring westward]. Advance in accordance with Combined Fleet Des., Op. Ord. 372.

25th October

98. 0713 *Zuikaku* detected by enemy.

99. 0817 About 80 enemy aircraft detected.

100. 0830 80 enemy carrier-based aircraft attacked. *Zuikaku* hit by one torpedo and has to resort to hand steering. *Zuiho* hit by bomb. *Chitose* listing. Other ships capable of making 20 knots. Whilst engaged in evasive manœuvres, lost sight of 6th Group : damage to it not known.

101. 0857 *Akitsuki* sinks.

102. 0937 *Chitose* sinks. *Shimotsuki* to its rescue. *Chiyoda* drops out of line. *Isudzu, Maki* detailed to assist it. *Tama's* maximum speed reduced to 13 knots as result of torpedo hit. Ordered to Okinawa alone.

103. 1000 2nd Wave, 30 aircraft attack.

104. 1100 *Zuikaku's* communication system breaks down. Flag hoisted on board *Oyodo*. From comm. intell. it is possible that an enemy task force is in a position bearing south-west of Ogasawara. 6th Group is ordered to retire on course 330°.

105. 1200 Ships afloat other than *Zuikaku, Chiyoda, Tama* able to make 18 knots.

106. 1414 *Zuikaku* sinks.

107. 1527 *Zuiho* sinks. *Hatsutsuki, Wakatsuki, Kuwa* assigned to their rescue.

APPENDIX M—*continued*

25th October—continued

108. 1915 Destroyer Division 61 (*Hatsutsuki*) and *Isudzu*, which had been detailed to rescue survivors of *Zuikaku* and *Chiyoda*, report that they were engaging enemy surface units at 1905 and 1910. *Oyodo, Hyuga, Ise* and *Shimotsuki* proceed to their aid. Course 185°, speed 16 knots. Asked *Hatsutsuki* for position but received no reply. Searched until 2330 but made no contact with friend or foe.

109. 2400 *Wakatsuki* joined up and reported as follows : *Hatsutsuki, Wakatsuki* and *Kuwa* engaged in rescue work of *Zuikaku* and *Zuiho* when, at 1900 they were engaged by about 10 enemy ships (two large cruisers, two apparent battleships and about one flotilla of destroyers). These attacked from east. *Wakatsuki* and *Kuwa* made a quick retreat, *Hatsutsuki* laid a smoke screen, and what happened subsequently is unknown.

26th October

110. 1500 Kd. M.B. action summary (S.M.S. 261602). At 251700 another 80 enemy aircraft attacked, but these were repulsed. The 6th Group joined the main body and while proceeding northward, we were in contact with another enemy formation but by 2000 we had evaded it.

APPENDIX N

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BatDiv.	Battleship Division.
BB	Battleship.
CA	Heavy Cruiser.
CAP	Combat Air Patrol
CarDiv.	Carrier Division.
Car Grp.	Carrier Group.
CIC	Combat Information Centre.
CL	Light Cruiser. Centre Line (torpedo tube).
Com.	Commander.
CruDiv.	Cruiser Division.
CTF (G) (U)	Commander Task Force (Group) (Unit).
CV	Aircraft Carrier.
CVE	Auxiliary Aircraft Carrier (Escort).
DD	Destroyer.
DE	Destroyer Escort (Escort Vessel).
DesDiv.	Destroyer Division.
DesRon	Destroyer Squadron [syn. Flotilla].
F4U	Single-engined Fighter Aircraft (Corsair).
F6F	Single-engined Fighter Aircraft (Hellcat).
F7F	Twin-engined Fighter Aircraft (Tigercat).
FM	Single-engined Fighter Aircraft (Wildcat).
IFD	Interfighter Director.
OTC	Officer in Tactical Command.
PPI	Plan Presentation Indicator.
PRT	Pentad Revolving Torpedo Tube.
QRT	Quadruple Revolving Torpedo Tube.
SB2C	Single-engined Dive Bomber (Helldiver).
SMS	Secret Message Series (Japanese).
TBF	Torpedo Bomber Aircraft.
TBS	Super Frequency Radio (Voice).
TF (G) (U)	Task Force (Group) (Unit).
TR	Triple Revolving Torpedo Tube.
VB	Bomber Aircraft.
VF	Fighter Aircraft.
VF (N)	Night Aircraft.
VHF	Very High Frequency.
VP	Patrol Aircraft.
VT	Torpedo Aircraft.
X (*prefix*)	Auxiliary.

BATTLE FOR LEYTE GULF

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73.7. 28.
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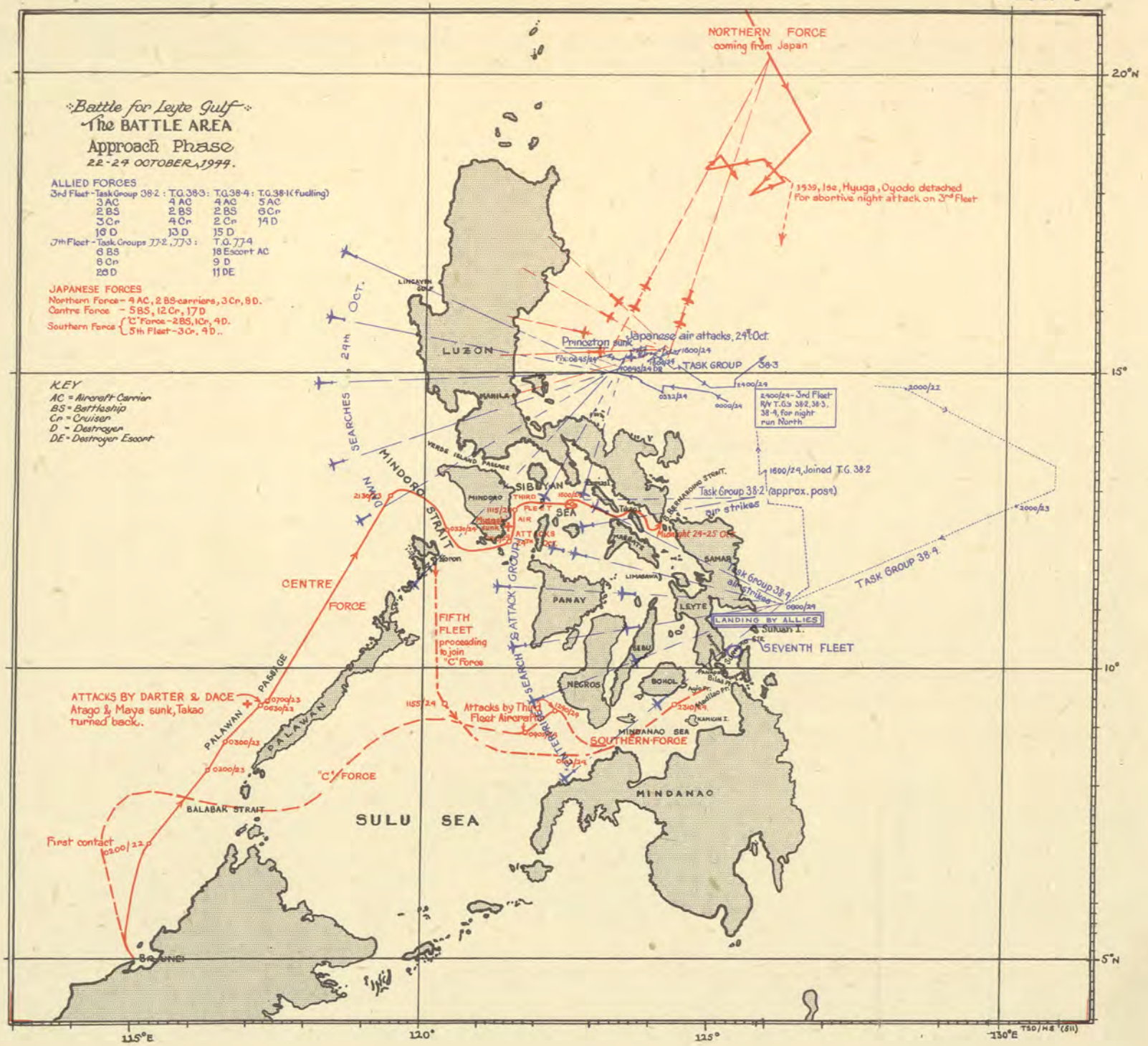
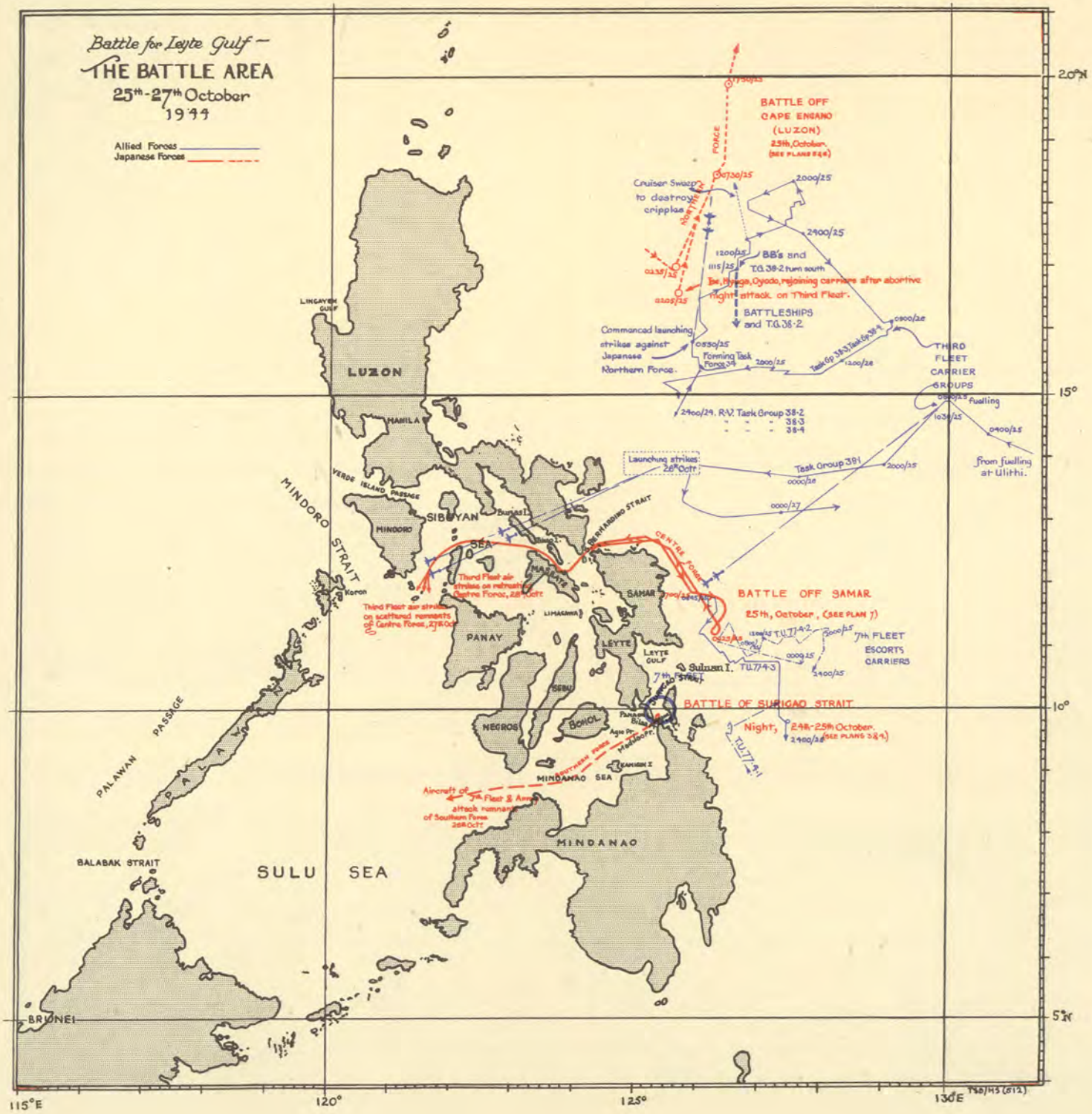
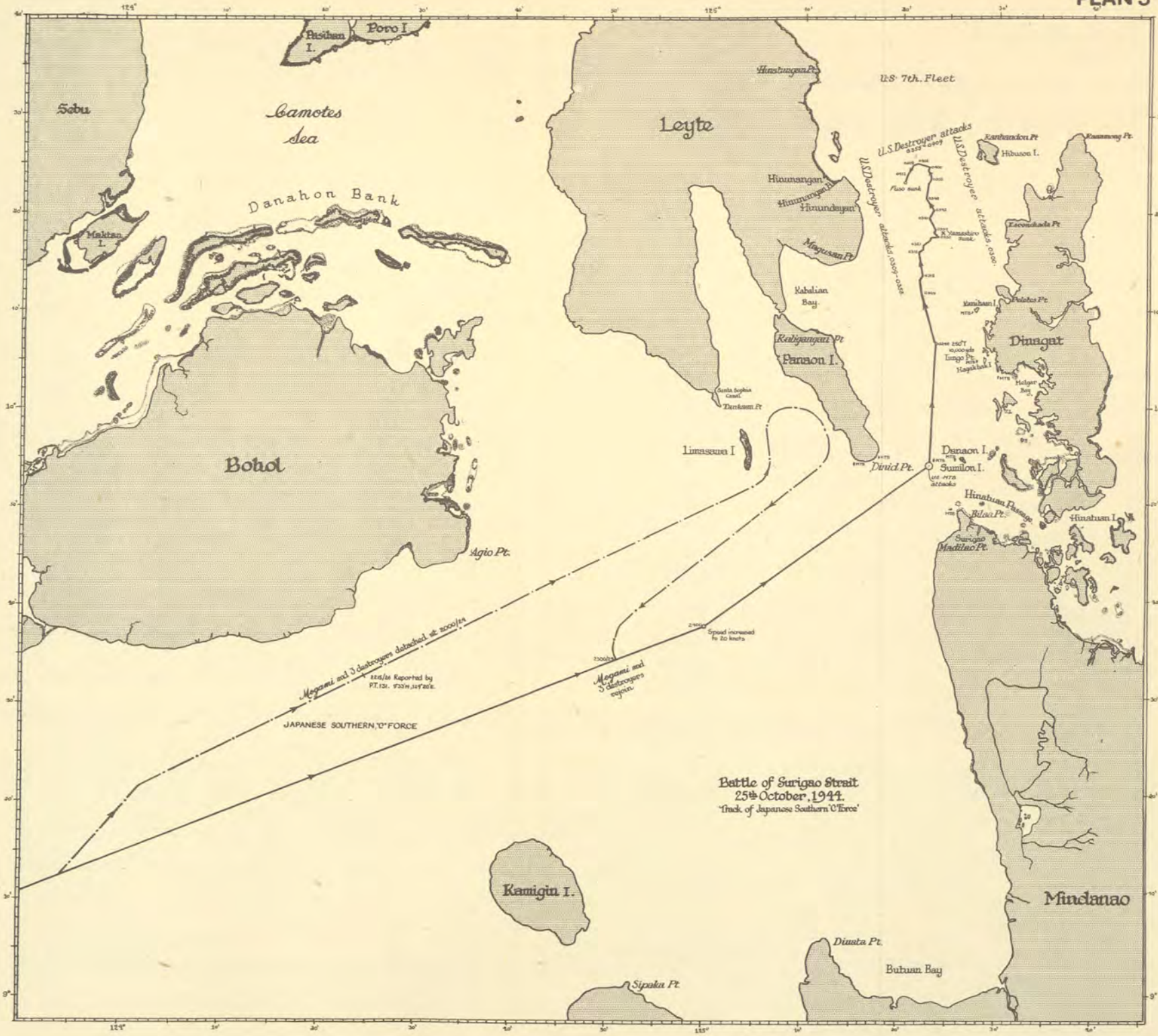
PLAN I

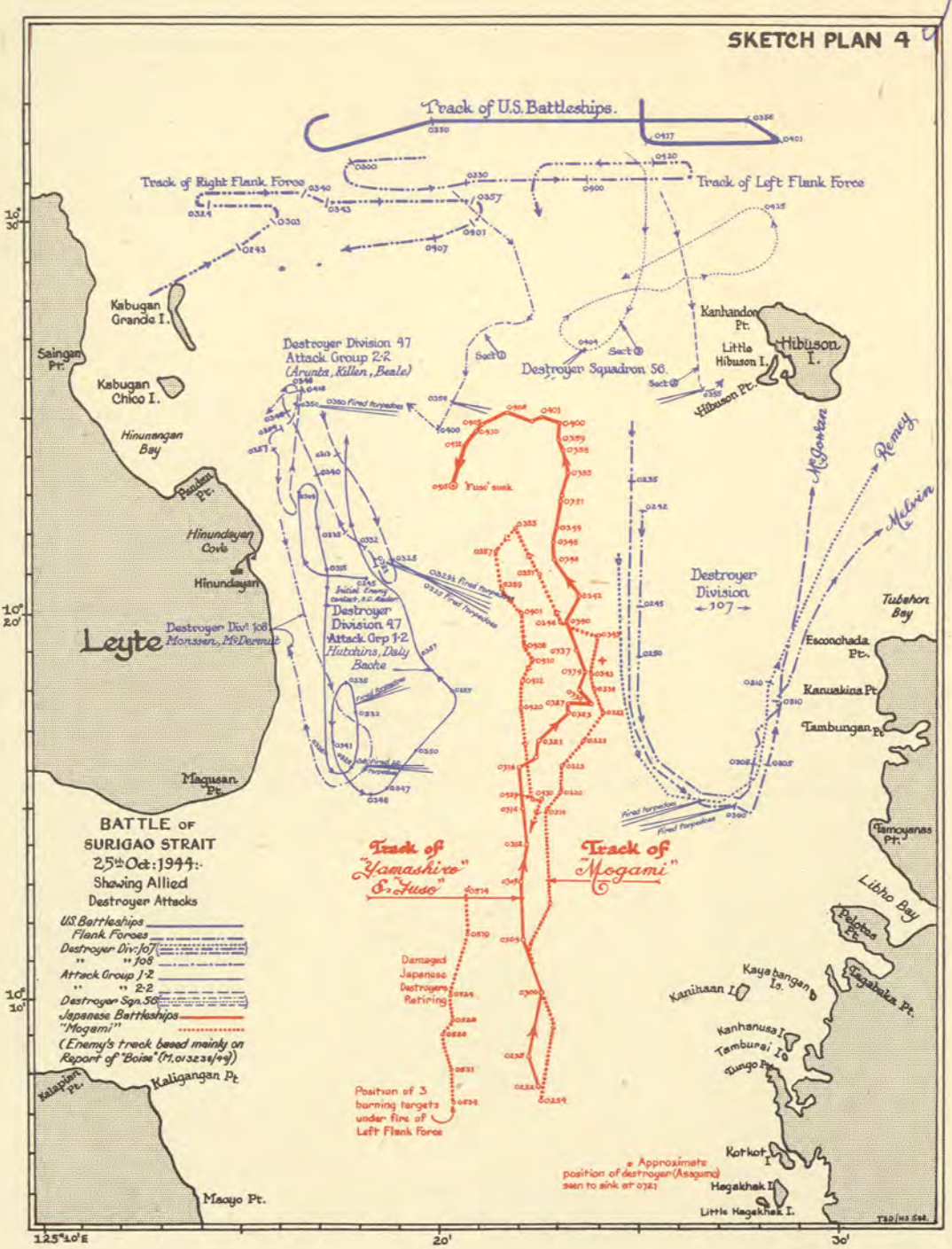

Battle for Leyte Gulf
The BATTLE AREA
Approach Phase
22-24 OCTOBER, 1944.
ALLIED FORCES
3rd Fleet - Task Group 38·2 : T.G. 38·3 : T.G. 38·4 : T.G. 38·1 (fuelling)
3 AC 4 AC 4 AC 5 AC
2 BS 2 BS 2 BS 6 Cr
3 Cr 4 Cr 2 Cr 14 D
16 D 13 D 15 D
7th Fleet - Task Groups 77·2, 77·3 : T.G. 77·4
6 BS 18 Escort AC
8 Cr 9 D
28 D 11 DE
JAPANESE FORCES
Northern Force - 4 AC, 2 BS-carriers, 3 Cr, 8 D.
Centre Force - 5 BS, 12 Cr, 17 D
Southern Force { 'C' Force - 2 BS, 1 Cr, 4 D. 5th Fleet - 3 Cr, 4 D..
KEY
AC = Aircraft Carrier
BS = Battleship
Cr = Cruiser
D = Destroyer
DE = Destroyer Escort
NORTHERN FORCE coming from Japan
Japanese air attacks, 24th Oct.
Princeton sunk
TASK GROUP 38·3
1939, Ise, Hyuga, Oyodo detached for abortive night attack on 3rd Fleet
2400/24 - 3rd Fleet R/V T.Gs 38·2, 38·3, 38·4, for night run North
1600/24, Joined T.G. 38·2
Task Group 38·2 (approx. posn)
Air strikes
Midnight 24-25 Oct.
TASK GROUP 38·4
Task Group 38·4 air strikes
LANDING BY ALLIES
SEVENTH FLEET
FIFTH FLEET proceeding to join 'C' Force
CENTRE FORCE
ATTACKS BY DARTER & DACE
Atago & Maya sunk, Takao turned back..
Attacks by Third Fleet Aircraft
SOUTHERN FORCE
'C' FORCE
First contact
SEARCHES
ATTACK GROUP
SEARCH
LUZON
MINDORO
SIBUYAN SEA
PANAY
LEYTE
SAMAR
NEGROS
BOHOL
MINDANAO
MINDANAO SEA
SULU SEA
PALAWAN
PALAWAN PASSAGE
BALABAC STRAIT
MINDORO STRAIT
BRUNEI
SEBU
20°N
15°
10°
5°N
115°E
120°
125°
130°E

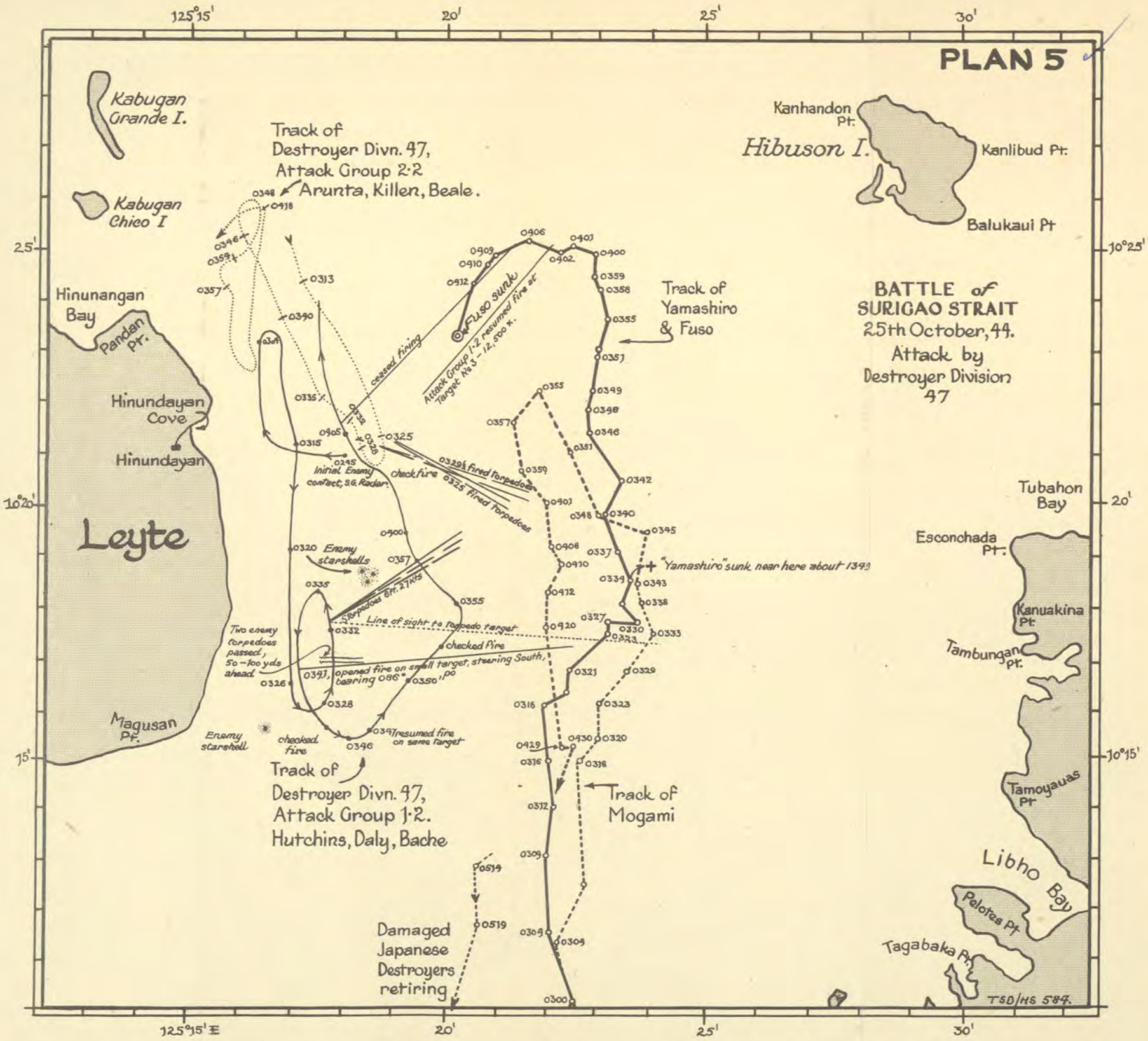
PLAN 2


Battle for Leyte Gulf —
THE BATTLE AREA
25th-27th October
1944
Allied Forces
Japanese Forces
BATTLE OFF CAPE ENGANO (LUZON)
25th, October.
(SEE PLANS 5&6)
NORTHERN FORCE
Cruiser Sweep to destroy cripples
0730/25
2000/25
2400/25
1200/25
1115/25
BB's and T.G.38.2 turn south
0235/25
0205/25
Ise, Hyuga, Oyodo, rejoining carriers after abortive night attack on 'Third Fleet'.
BATTLESHIPS and T.G.38.2
Commenced launching strikes against Japanese Northern Force.
0550/25
Forming Task Force 34
2000/25
Task Gp. 38.3
Task Gp. 38.4
1200/26
0900/26
THIRD FLEET CARRIER GROUPS
2400/24. R.V. Task Group 38.2
" " " 38.3
" " " 38.4
Fuelling
1036/25
0400/25
from fuelling at Ulithi.
Launching strikes: 26th Oct.
Task Group 38.1
2000/25
0000/26
0000/27
LINGAYEN GULF
LUZON
MANILA
VERDE ISLAND PASSAGE
MINDORO STRAIT
MINDORO
SIBUYAN SEA
Burias I.
SAN BERNARDINO STRAIT
CENTRE FORCE
Third Fleet air strikes on retiring Centre Force, 26th Oct.
Third Fleet air strikes on scattered remnants of Centre Force, 27th Oct.
MASBATE
SAMAR
BATTLE OFF SAMAR
25th, October, (SEE PLAN 7)
0823 AB
1200/25 TU.77.4.2
2000/25
0009/25
2400/25
7th FLEET ESCORTS CARRIERS
LIMASAWA
PANAY
LEYTE
LEYTE GULF
Suluan I.
TU.77.4.3
7th Fleet Strike
SEBU
BATTLE OF SURIGAO STRAIT
Night, 24th-25th October.
2400/24 (SEE PLANS 3&4)
NEGROS
BOHOL
Panaon
Bilaran
Agio Pt.
Mindanao Pt.
SURIGAO STRAIT
KAMIGUIN I.
MINDANAO SEA
TU.77.4.1
PALAWAN PASSAGE
PALAWAN
Aircraft of 3rd Fleet & Army attack remnants of Southern Force 26th Oct.
MINDANAO
BALABAK STRAIT
SULU SEA
BRUNEI
20°N
15°
10°
5°N
115°E
120°
125°
130°E
TSO/HS (812)

PLAN 3


Pasihan I.
Poro I.
Cebu
Camotes Sea
Danahon Bank
Maktan I.
Leyte
Hinatungan Pt.
U.S. 7th. Fleet
U.S. Destroyer attacks 0222 - 0309
U.S. Destroyer attacks 0309 - 0326
U.S. Destroyer attacks 0330 -
Hinunangan
Himmangan Pt.
Hinundayan
Magusan Pt.
Kabalian Bay
Kanigaangan Pt.
Panaon I.
Santa Sophia Canal
Tamkasan Pt.
Limasawa I
Bohol
Agio Pt.
Divid Pt.
Danaon I.
Sumilon I.
Hibuson I.
Kanhaman Pt.
Kasonohada Pt.
Kanihaan I.
Palatas Pt.
Dinagat
Hayakhak I.
Hulgar Bay
Hinatuan Passage
Bilao Pt.
Hinatuan I.
Surigao Madilao Pt.
Mindanao
Kamigin I.
Diuata Pt.
Butuan Bay
Sipaka Pt.
Megami and 3 destroyers detached at 2000/24
Megami and 3 destroyers rejoin.
Speed increased to 20 knots
JAPANESE SOUTHERN 'C' FORCE
Battle of Surigao Strait
25th October, 1944.
Track of Japanese Southern 'C' Force


SKETCH PLAN 4
Track of U.S. Battleships.
Track of Right Flank Force
Track of Left Flank Force
Kabugan Grande I.
Saingan Pt.
Kabugan Chico I.
Hinunangan Bay
Pandan Pt.
Hinundayan Cove
Hinundayan
Leyte
Magusan Pt.
Kaligangan Pt
Kalapian Pt.
Macayo Pt.
Destroyer Div.s 108
Monssen, McDermut
Destroyer Division 47
Attack Group 2-2
(Aruntz, Killen, Beale)
Destroyer Division 47
Attack Grp 1-2
Hutchins, Daly
Bache
Destroyer Squadron 56.
Sect①
Sect②
Sect③
'Fuso' sunk.
Destroyer Division 107
Kanhandon Pt.
Little Hibuson I.
Hibuson I.
Hibuson Pt.
McGowen
Remey
Melvin
Tubabon Bay
Esconchada Pt.
Kanuaskina Pt.
Tambungan Pt.
Tamoyenas Pt.
Libho Bay
Pedoba Pt.
Kanihaan I.
Kaya bangan Is.
Kanhanusa I.
Tamburai I.
Dungo Pt.
Kotkot I.
Hagakhak I.
Little Hagakhak I.
Damaged Japanese Destroyers Retiring
Position of 3 burning targets under fire of Left Flank force
* Approximate position of destroyer (Asagumo) seen to sink at 0721
Track of "Yamashiro" & "Fuso"
Track of "Mogami"
BATTLE OF SURIGAO STRAIT
25th Oct: 1944:-
Showing Allied Destroyer Attacks
US Battleships
Flank Forces
Destroyer Div: 107
" " 108
Attack Group 1-2
" " 2-2
Destroyer Sqn. 56
Japanese Battleships
"Mogami"
(Enemy's track based mainly on Report of "Boise" (M.013234/44))
Initial Enemy contact, S.C. Radar
Fired torpedoes
Fired 46 torpedoes
Fired torpedoes
Fired torpedoes
Fired torpedoes
Fired torpedoes
10° 30'
10° 20'
10° 10'
125°10'E
20'
30'
T32/HS Sht.


PLAN 5
BATTLE of SURIGAO STRAIT
25th October, 44.
Attack by Destroyer Division 47
Kabugan Grande I.
Kabugan Chico I
Hibuson I.
Kanhandon Pt.
Kanlibud Pt.
Balukaui Pt
Hinunangan Bay
Pandan Pt.
Hinundayan Cove
Hinundayan
Leyte
Magusan Pt.
Tubahon Bay
Esconchada Pt.
Kanuakina Pt.
Tambungan Pt.
Tamoyauas Pt
Libho Bay
Palotes Pt.
Tagabaka Pt.
Track of Destroyer Divn. 47, Attack Group 2·2 Arunta, Killen, Beale.
Track of Yamashiro & Fuso
Track of Destroyer Divn. 47, Attack Group 1·2. Hutchins, Daly, Bache
Track of Mogami
Damaged Japanese Destroyers retiring
FUSO sunk
Attack Group 1·2 resumed fire at Target No 3 – 12,000 x.
ceased firing
Initial Enemy contact, S.G. Radar.
check fire
0325 fired Torpedoes
0329½ fired torpedoes
Enemy starshells
Torpedoes 6ft. 27 kts
Line of sight to torpedo target
checked fire
Two enemy torpedoes passed, 50–100 yds ahead.
opened fire on small target, steering South, bearing 086°
0350 ½ po
Enemy starshell
checked fire
resumed fire on same target
"Yamashiro" sunk near here about 1349
125°15'
20'
25'
30'
10°25'
10°20'
20'
10°15'
TSD/HS 584.

PLAN 7

BATTLE off SAMAR
25th October,
1944.
GENERAL PLAN.

SAN BERNARDINO STRAIT

ENEMY'S TRACK

Samar

Leyte

Bohol

Mindanao

D Suluan I.

ENEMY MAIN BODY 0445/25
4 BATTLESHIPS
5 HEAVY CRUISERS
2 LIGHT CRUISERS
11 DESTROYERS

2 ENEMY HEAVY CRUISERS DETACHED FROM MAIN BODY

0716 TORPEDO ATTACK BY OWN DESTROYERS

0720 ENTERED RAIN SQUALL, ALTERED COURSE TO SOUTH

0800 TORPEDO ATTACK BY OWN DESTROYERS

0911 GAMBIER BAY SUNK
3 DESTROYERS SIGHTED

TORPEDO ATTACK BY ENEMY LIGHT FORCES 0920

1050 ST. LO SUNK BY SUICIDES

COMMENCED LAUNCHING AIR STRIKE

1300/25

0600/25 FUELLING

to be Launched Strike No 1

1600/25

2000/25

0000/26

0900/25

TASK GROUP 38.1

0000/25

2000

T.U. 77.4.2

0000/25 T.U. 77.4.2

T.U. 77.4.3

2400/25

1735/25 USS BULL & EVERSOLE LEFT TO RECOVER SURVIVORS OF 77.4.3.

2000

0759/25, U.S.S. SUWANEE HIT BY SUICIDE A/C.

0735/25, U.S.S. SANTEE TORPEDOED

0740/25, U.S.S. SANTEE HIT BY SUICIDE A/C.

T.U. 77.4.1.

2240/25
+ U.S.S. COOLBAUCH REPORTS S/M SUNK

2300/25, T.U. 77.4.3 DEPARTED FOR WOENDI.

2400/25

11°

12°

13°

124°

125°

126°

127°

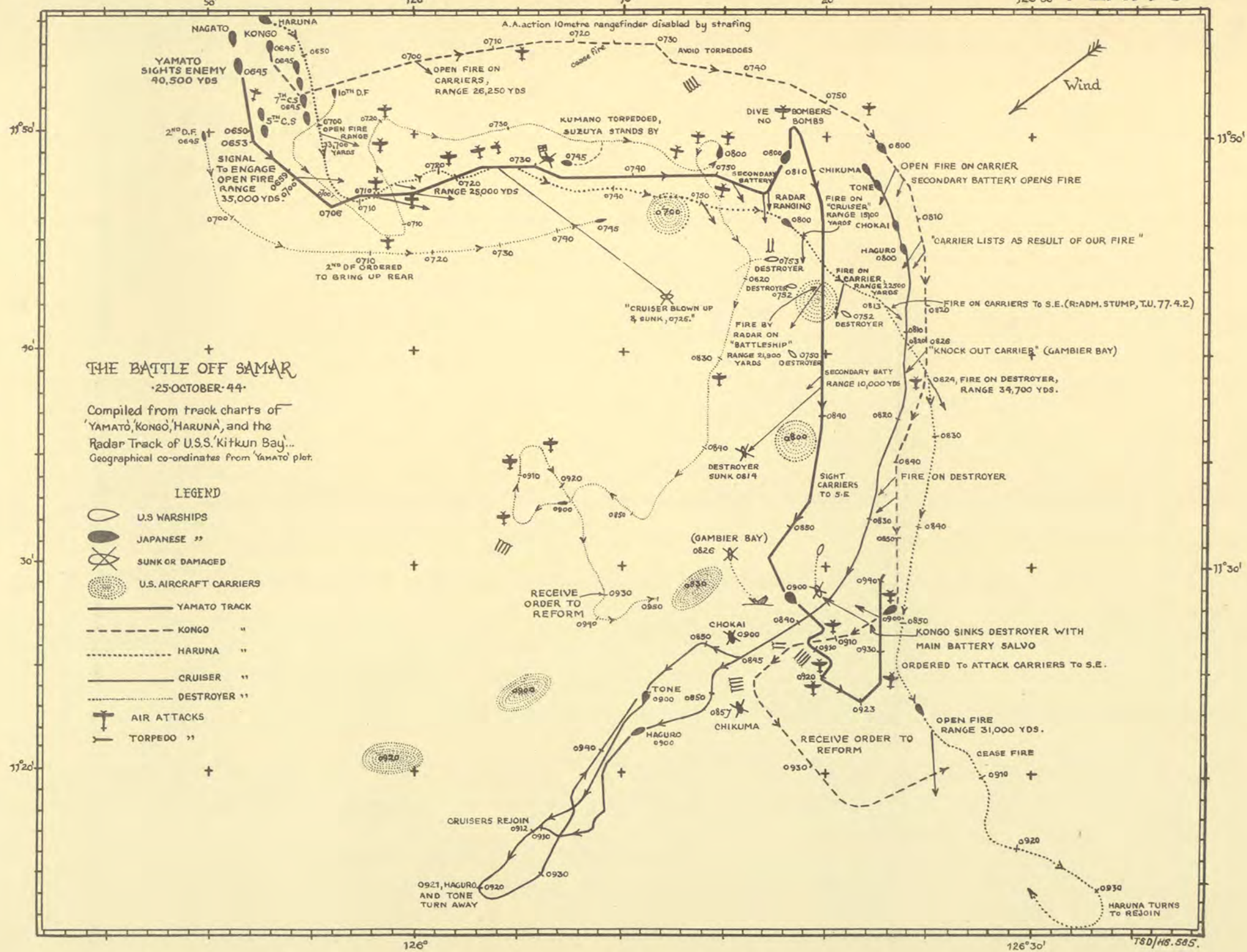
128°

129°

130°

TSD/HS (510)

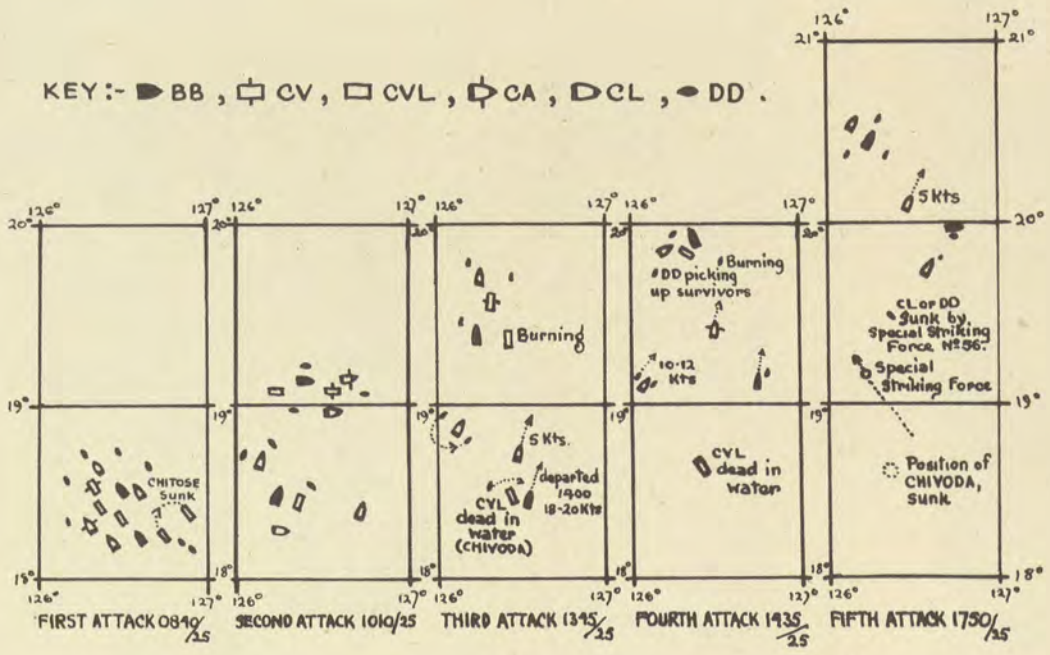
PLAN 8

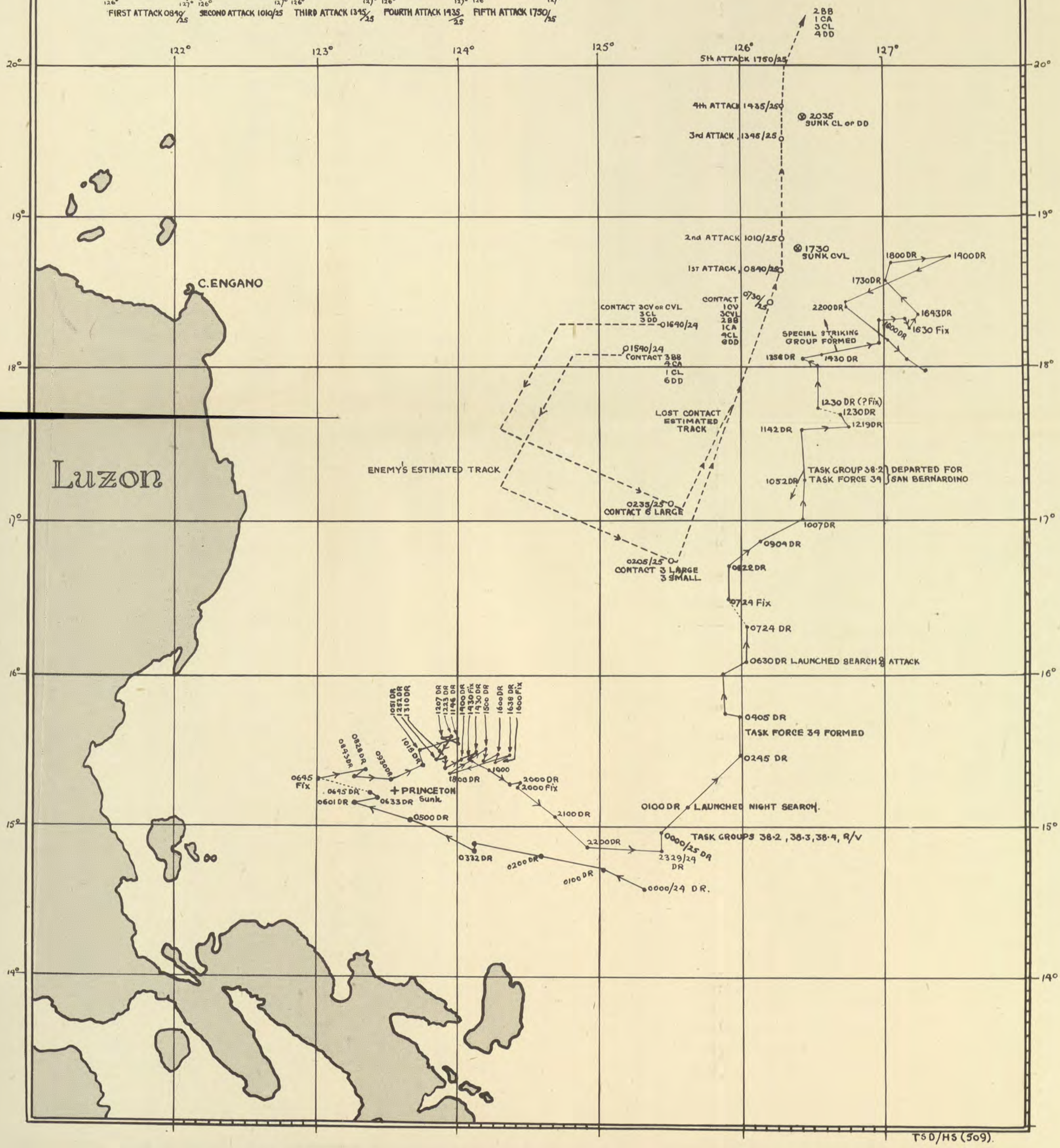

THE BATTLE OFF SAMAR
·25·OCTOBER·44·
Compiled from track charts of 'YAMATO', 'KONGO', 'HARUNA', and the Radar Track of U.S.S. 'Kitkun Bay'...
Geographical co-ordinates from 'YAMATO' plot.
LEGEND
U.S WARSHIPS
JAPANESE "
SUNK OR DAMAGED
U.S. AIRCRAFT CARRIERS
YAMATO TRACK
KONGO "
HARUNA "
CRUISER "
DESTROYER "
AIR ATTACKS
TORPEDO "
NAGATO
KONGO
HARUNA
YAMATO SIGHTS ENEMY 40,500 YDS
0645
0650
0700
OPEN FIRE ON CARRIERS, RANGE 26,250 YDS
A.A.action 10metre rangefinder disabled by strafing
0710
0720
0730
CEASE FIRE
AVOID TORPEDOES
0740
0750
Wind
7TH C.S
5TH C.S
10TH D.F
2ND D.F
0653
SIGNAL To ENGAGE OPEN FIRE RANGE 35,000 YDS.
0659
0700
OPEN FIRE RANGE 33,700 YARDS
0706
RANGE 25,000 YDS
KUMANO TORPEDOED, SUZUYA STANDS BY
0745
2ND DF ORDERED TO BRING UP REAR
"CRUISER BLOWN UP & SUNK, 0726."
DIVE BOMBERS NO BOMBS
0800
0810
CHIKUMA
TONE
SECONDARY BATTERY
RADAR RANGING
FIRE ON "CRUISER" RANGE 15,100 YARDS
CHOKAI
OPEN FIRE ON CARRIER
SECONDARY BATTERY OPENS FIRE
"CARRIER LISTS AS RESULT OF OUR FIRE"
HAGURO 0800
0753 DESTROYER
0620 DESTROYER
0752
FIRE ON CARRIER RANGE 22,500 YARDS
FIRE ON CARRIERS To S.E. (R: ADM. STUMP, T.U. 77.4.2)
0813
0752 DESTROYER
FIRE BY RADAR ON "BATTLESHIP" RANGE 21,900 YARDS
0750 DESTROYER
0826 "KNOCK OUT CARRIER" (GAMBIER BAY)
SECONDARY BATY RANGE 10,000 YDS
0824, FIRE ON DESTROYER, RANGE 34,700 YDS.
0820
0830
0840
0850
0900
0910
0920
0930
0940
DESTROYER SUNK 0819
SIGHT CARRIERS TO S.E
FIRE ON DESTROYER
(GAMBIER BAY) 0826
RECEIVE ORDER TO REFORM
CHOKAI 0900
KONGO SINKS DESTROYER WITH MAIN BATTERY SALVO
ORDERED To ATTACK CARRIERS To S.E.
0845
0857
CHIKUMA
TONE 0900
HAGURO 0900
0923
OPEN FIRE RANGE 31,000 YDS.
CEASE FIRE
RECEIVE ORDER TO REFORM
CRUISERS REJOIN 0912
0921, HAGURO AND TONE TURN AWAY
HARUNA TURNS To REJOIN
126°
126°30'
11°50'
11°30'
11°20'
TSD/HS.585.

PLAN 9

KEY:- BB , CV , CVL , CA , CL , DD .

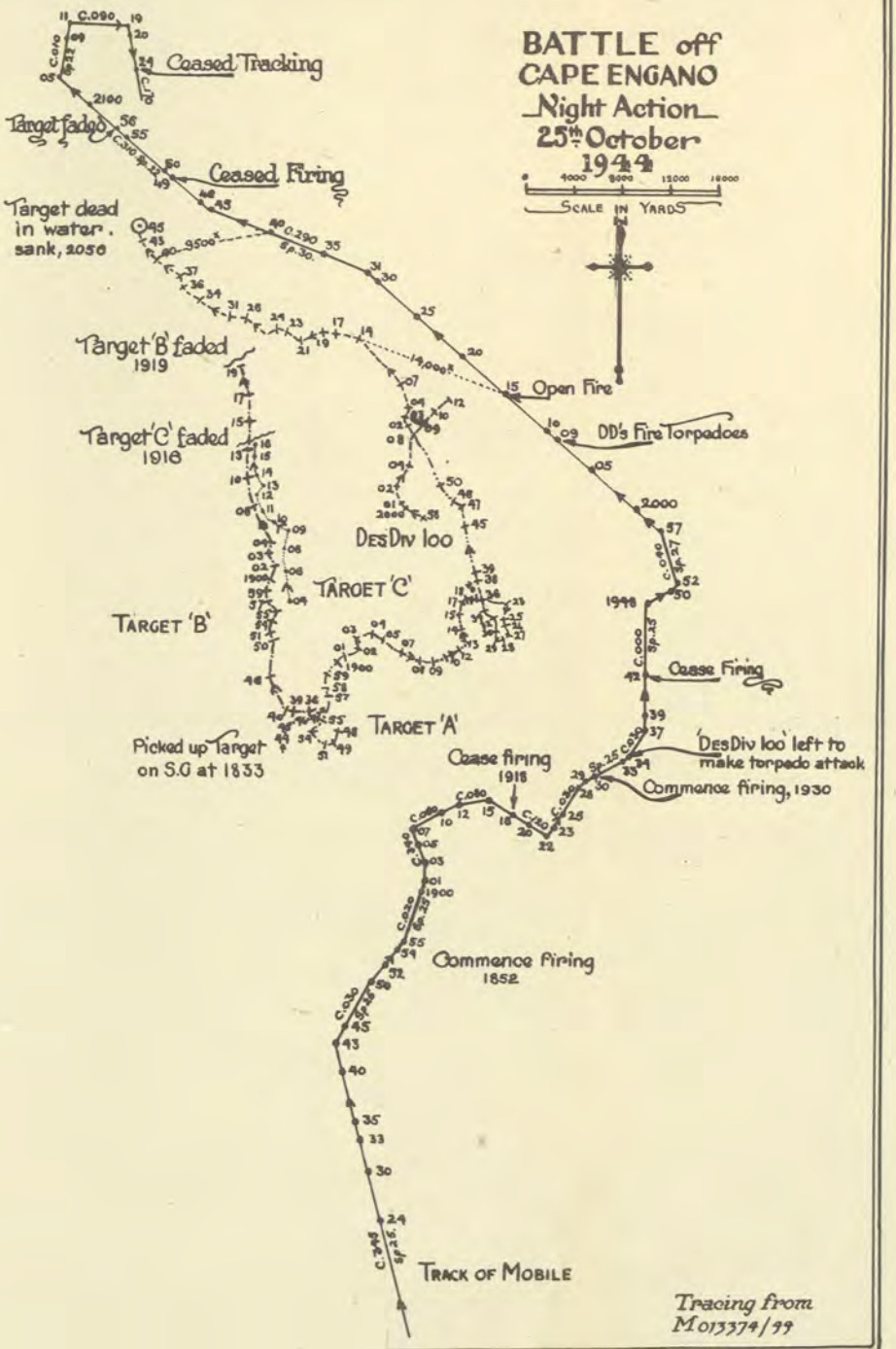
BATTLE off CAPE ENGANO
Track Chart of 'Lexington'
24th, 25th OCTOBER, '44.
M01571/45





TSD/HS (509).

PLAN 10



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